

No Fate by teej_318

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Characters: Calvin Powell, Dustin Henderson, Eleven | Jane Hopper, Erica Sinclair, Jim "Chief" Hopper, Jonathan Byers, Joyce Byers, Lucas Sinclair, Martin Brenner, Max Mayfield, Mike Wheeler, Nancy Wheeler, Phil Callahan, Robin Buckley, Steve Harrington, T-1000 (Terminator), Terry Ives, The Terminator, Will Byers

Relationships: Jonathan Byers/Nancy Wheeler, Joyce Byers/Jim "Chief" Hopper, Maxine "Max" Mayfield/Lucas Sinclair, Will Byers & Eleven | Jane & Dustin Henderson & Maxine Mayfield & Lucas Sinclair & Mike Wheeler, Will Byers/Mike Wheeler

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Summary:

In 2050, the Human Resistance is on the brink of victory against Skynet. However, the super computer has a plan in place to ensure its survival and bring about the defeat of the leaders of the Resistance: Jonathan and Will Byers and their lieutenants.

1. Prologue

Author's Note:

- For [paladinscleric](#), [mikeswill](#), [WillByersFan](#).

For my forever writing friends Ann and Anna.
For Savannah and Emily, two of the bravest women I know.

For my Twitter Byler buddy David -- we need to meet one day!

For all my readers for sticking with me all these years.

This story is for you.

Will closed his eyes, relishing in the silence of not being around anyone else, at least for a moment. Being one of the people responsible for bringing hope to all of humanity was a daunting task at best, terribly exhausting and overwhelming at worst.

General Will Byers was one of the leaders of the Human Resistance, alongside his older brother Jonathan. In fact, their entire family were leaders in the Resistance. Mike Wheeler-Byers, Will's husband, was second-in-command to Jonathan and Will. Jonathan and Will's adopted sister El was a lieutenant under their command. Mike's older sister Nancy, Jonathan's wife, served in the resistance as well. Their mother, Joyce Byers, had prepared Jonathan and Will for the war during their childhood, training them in combat and physically and mentally preparing them for what lay ahead.

As for Jonathan and Will's father, it was more complicated. He certainly was involved in the war, though he didn't know his role as Jonathan and Will's father. But Will knew that his father would soon figure out his importance to the war and would finally meet Jonathan and Will's mother in some fashion.

Will sighed to himself as he once again mulled over his responsibilities. It was difficult to explain to anyone else exactly what was supposed to happen, which is why Jonathan and Will tended to keep the information to themselves. Will of course had told Mike

everything, and Mike, being the wonderful partner that he was, had listened with an open mind and not questioned any of what Will told him.

As if Will's thoughts about him had summoned him, Mike's voice called out to Will.

"Will, is everything okay?" Mike asked, his never-ending concern for Will evident in his voice.

Will smiled slightly to himself as he opened his eyes again and turned to face Mike. Mike had on the face he reserved only for Will. Will could see nothing but love written on Mike's face.

"Everything's fine, Mikey," Will said reassuringly, stepping toward Mike and pulling him in for a hug. "I just have a lot on my mind with everything that's supposed to happen."

Mike nodded.

"I know," he whispered. "It's definitely a lot for you to have to consider. Do you think it's gonna happen the way your Mom told you it would?"

"I don't know, Mike. I honestly don't know. I hope it does. If anything, it'll stop this terrible war from happening in the first place."

"And what if It succeeds in Its mission?" Mike asked.

"Then I hope I'm around long enough to tell you how much I love you," Will said with a grin.

Mike smirked.

"How about you tell me now?" he said in a teasing voice.

"I love you, Mike Wheeler," Will said, giving Mike a quick kiss. "I've always loved you. And I always will. No matter what. I promise you."

"I love you, too, Will Byers," said Mike. "I will never stop loving you and you'll never stop driving me crazy."

"That's cause we're gonna go crazy together, right?"

"That's right, crazy together."

Mike and Will pulled each other into a hug, holding on to each other tightly. They could have stayed that way forever and might have had they not been interrupted after several seconds by a familiar voice.

"General Byers?"

Will broke off from the hug with Mike and looked up to see Sergeant Jim Hopper had approached them. Hopper was one of Will's most trusted lieutenants and one of his most valuable. Will hadn't told Hopper about his importance in the war, though he knew he would soon have to. Will brushed aside those thoughts as he nodded at Hopper.

"Sergeant Hopper," Will greeted.

"I'm sorry to interrupt General, but the rest of the team is ready for you."

"Duty calls," Will said with a grin at Mike. "I guess we'd better go and meet with the others and prepare for what's ahead."

"I'll be with you the whole way," Mike said, reaching down and grabbing onto one of Will's hands and curling their fingers together.

Will nodded at Hopper, who turned to lead Will and Mike to the gathering of the rest of the senior officers of the Resistance. The senior officers consisted of their childhood friends: Dustin Henderson, Max Mayfield and Lucas Sinclair and Will's adoptive sister, El. Their friends Steve Harrington, Robin Buckley, Mike's sister Nancy Wheeler, and Erica Sinclair rounded out the senior Resistance team, and all of them were going to fight this final fight against Skynet in the hopes of ending the war and preventing further destruction of humanity.

"Are you ready for this, General?" Jim asked, pulling Will out of his thoughts once again.

"As ready as I'll ever be, Jim," Will replied. "I don't know if there's a

right way to prepare for a final assault, but I guess this is as good as any."

"What are your plans for after the war, General?"

Will grinned.

"Nothing beats a quiet evening at home with a margarita with the love of my life," Will said, glancing at Mike, who grinned at him.

"What about you, Sergeant?"

"A cold beer with my feet up sounds like heaven," replied Hopper.

"Yeah that does sound good," said Will. "God, I wish my Mother could be around to see this. She would get a kick at going after Skynet one last time."

"What would she be doing right now?" Hopper asked, the glow in his face evident as they talked about Joyce Byers.

"She'd be getting ready to lead a battalion into the fight," Will said. "She'd have the best fighters, tech specialists, bombers, the whole works."

Hopper's face seemed to light up even more than it already was. Will smiled to himself. He knew why Hopper always looked like that whenever Joyce was talked about, even if Hopper never said why out loud.

They turned into the next room, where the rest of the senior Resistance members were waiting for their arrival. Several of them greeted Will, patting him on the back and whispering words of good luck in his ear as he passed them. Will smiled at the others, brushing them off slightly before he took his place next to Jonathan, who looked battle weary as ever, but determined as well.

"You ready, little brother?" Jonathan asked.

"After you, big brother," Will said with a grin.

Jonathan rolled his eyes before he called the senior Resistance members to order. Everyone immediately stopped talking and turned

to face Will and Jonathan.

"All right, everyone: You all know what's at stake here," Jonathan said in his commanding voice. "The future of humanity is at hand tonight. We have a chance to deal a crushing blow to Skynet and to these machines that have haunted us for almost 20 years. I don't need to tell you to keep your heads straight and to fight with everything you've got. If we succeed tonight, there is hope for a better future. If we succeed tonight, we can save humanity and start a new life in a new world."

When Jonathan finished speaking, the senior members of the Resistance cheered loudly for several seconds before Will held up a hand, silencing them.

"None of you need to remind me how exhausted we all are because of this war," Will began, looking around at all those he loved and thinking they were all lucky to all still be alive at what would likely be the end of the war. "I look at each of you and I see the marks of this long and terrible war. For our children, our children's children, so they will not carry these marks. But they will know who we are and what we did. That we did not bow down! We did not give in! We rose up, at this moment, at this hour, willing to sacrifice everything so that they can live in freedom! On this night, we take back our world!"

Cheers among the senior Resistance members erupted once again. All of them felt hopeful, even jubilant, at the possibility of bringing the war to an end and defeating Skynet forever. Will let the cheering go on for several moments before he held up his hands again to speak.

"We all know what we're up against," Will said. "The machines have a secret weapon that they are prepared to use. Based on Dustin and Steve's analysis of this weapon, we've learned that it is Skynet's last-ditch effort to turn the tide of the war. Skynet has a contingency plan in place in order to preserve itself and try to prevent humanity from fighting back. This battle will not be easy. We will have to hit them with everything we've got and then some.

"But I promise you, this: if we are successful tonight, we will bring an end to this war. And we will finally be able to live in peace again."

Hopper sat in the back of a van that was approaching the entrance to the Skynet Central Control. A defunct T-800 Terminator sat in the driver's seat of the van, which would initially throw off the Terminators guarding the entrance. But Hopper would have only seconds before the Terminators would discover the trap and he would have one brief window of time to activate the trap.

The van came to a stop. Hopper held his breath and shut his eyes, waiting for the sign that the Terminators had discovered the defunct driver. Within ten seconds, gunfire had erupted all around the van. Hopper opened his eyes and shouted, "NOW!" before he pressed the button on the detonator.

The van erupted in explosions. The explosions were large enough to destroy all of the guarding Terminators, and Hopper had to move quickly to escape the brunt of the explosion. As soon as he was out of the van, Hopper turned and saw Will and Jonathan leading the senior team into the area, along with a battalion of soldiers.

Will and Jonathan soon jumped onto a large weapon that had been vacated by the destroyed Terminators. They started up the weapon and aimed it at the shield guarding Skynet's core and fired on it. The shield was destroyed instantly and the brothers jumped down, their weapons at the ready, as the Resistance advanced on the core.

Dozens of Terminators came rushing at the soldiers. The soldiers came prepared and immediately started firing on the Terminators, taking them out one-by-one. Once in the clear, Erica and Lucas led a small squad into the core to destroy it and end the battle quickly.

Meanwhile, Jonathan and Will were fighting alongside Mike and Nancy. Hopper spotted the four of them and rushed to assist. Will didn't even notice Hopper approaching, too distracted by a bright light that was emanating from a nearby building.

Will's heart sunk as he realized what he was seeing.

"The weapon!" he shouted. "They're using it! We've got to stop them!"

Will broke off from the others and started storming toward the weapon.

"Will!" Hopper shouted, forgetting about the others and chasing after Will, who was stopped by a large Hunter Killer.

"Everyone head to that building!" Will yelled. "We've got to stop them from using the weapon!"

Will froze in his tracks and immediately started firing rapidly on the HK. Will grunted as he fired shot after shot on the HK. Hopper joined him in shooting at the HK. Moments later, Mike approached them, followed closely by Jonathan and Nancy.

"I'm right here, you son of a bitch!" Will screamed as he continued to fire on the HK. "You want me, come and get me!"

The five of them continued their barrage against the HK, which seemed to be wearing down. Suddenly, the HK froze, as did all of the nearby Terminators that Resistance soldiers were fighting.

"Skynet is down!" Erica shouted through the Resistance's radio. "Repeat: Skynet is down! The core had been destroyed. The war is over!"

While other members of the Resistance erupted in cheers, Will didn't join them. Instead, he stared at the building where the weapon was located, his heart sinking as he realized he failed to prevent Skynet from using it. Will knew what had to be done now, and he was almost too shell-shocked to do it.

Mike approached Will from the side and put his arms around him.

"Are you okay?" Mike asked gently.

Will shrugged.

"I know," Mike said. "You know what has to be done now. Everything will be okay, Will. I promise."

"I hope you're right, Mike."

Over the next half hour, the leaders of the Human Resistance entered the building where the weapon was stored. None of them, apart from Jonathan, Will or Mike knew exactly what the weapon was, but Robin guessed it was a time machine of sorts, just based on its design.

Max hacked into the computer connected to the weapon and confirmed it was a time displacement field. She typed furiously for a few moments before finding out what had happened when the TDF was activated.

"A Terminator was sent back through time to May 12, 1999 in Los Angeles," Max explained. "Skynet sent a T-800 to a time before any of us were born."

"Why would Skynet do that?" asked Lucas. "If Skynet wanted us dead, surely it could have sent us to a time right before the war and stopped us from surviving Judgment Day."

"Because Skynet wants to erase our entire existence," Jonathan answered.

"You mean they're going back to a time to before we were born and they're gonna try killing us as kids?" asked Dustin.

"No," Will said sharply. "Our mother, Joyce, is going to be the target of the Terminator."

"How do you know that, Will?" asked Steve, who looked confused about the whole situation.

"I just do," Will replied. "You guys have to trust me. This was Skynet's contingency plan. Once Skynet sensed that it was near defeat, it would activate this contingency plan in order to try to ensure its survival, despite our victory."

Will looked to Jonathan to finish explaining. He didn't have the energy to explain what needed to happen.

"Our mother is the target because Skynet thinks that without our existence, it can win the war and end humanity," Jonathan explained. "If the Terminator succeeds, it is highly likely that Skynet will bring

about the end of the world as we know it. None of us will survive."

"Then we've got to do something!" Erica shrieked. "We've got to go back through time and stop the Terminator from killing Joyce! We do that, we can stop Skynet from trying to change the future."

"That's the idea," El said, nodding at Erica. "But there's just one problem."

"What's that?" asked Nancy.

"The person we send back through time won't be able to return to the present," El replied. "This time displacement field is entirely one-way. There is no coming back."

"And there's no bringing weapons with you," added Jonathan. "The time displacement field will destroy anything that's not human tissue. That's why the Terminators were being fit with human skin; in order to succeed in sending back a Terminator through time."

"Well we'd better stop sitting around talking about it and send someone back through time," said Dustin. "The question is, which one of us is brave enough or stupid enough to do it?"

"I'll do it," Hopper said quickly.

Everyone turned to stare at him. Hopper had a determined look on his face and they all knew there was no way they were going to be able to stop Hopper from getting into the time machine.

"Why should we send you?" Will asked, finally finding his voice after several minutes of silence.

"Because I would die for Joyce Byers," Hopper replied.

Several of the others scoffed at Hopper's answer. Will remained stoic in his expression.

"Everyone in this room would die for Joyce Byers," Will replied. "What makes you any different?"

Hopper hesitated before he answered.

"You know why," he said, speaking only to Will.

Will was taken aback by Hopper's answer. He looked directly into Hopper's face and realized that, somehow, Hopper had deduced his role in both the present and the past and was ready to take it on as expected. Will smiled to himself before he nodded.

"Erica and I can have the TDF ready in 15 minutes," Robin said. "We'll get the destination programmed and Jim can step in and go back through time."

Hopper put down his weapon and went to another area of the room to change out of his clothes. Will walked over to Hopper and took his possessions as Hopper undressed.

"You knew the TDF was here, Will," Hopper said without preamble. "You knew where the destination of the Terminator would be. You knew the machines would fall tonight and they would use this contingency plan. But you didn't tell any of us."

There was no hint of malice or betrayal in Hopper's words. He was merely stating facts to Will, who did not dispute any of them.

"I know you were just trying to protect us, Will, so I don't fault you for any of it. I just hope you know what you're doing by sending me back."

"I'm helping ensure the survival of humanity," Will said.

"I know you are, Will," Hopper said. "I just hope that everything will work out and we can stop this war from going the way Skynet wants it to."

"We can certainly hope," Will said. "Now, listen, Jim. My mother will not be the same person you've heard all about. She's just a waitress trying to figure out her life. You've got to be prepared for anything to happen. And she might think you're a loon or something. You'll just have to be patient with her."

Hopper nodded as he finished undressing. He and Will walked back to the time displacement field, where the others were watching them both intently. Hopper nodded at the others as he passed them and

stepped into the center of the time displacement field.

"Good luck, Hopper," Jonathan called once Hopper was in place.

"We'll see you again someday," Will added. "That's a promise."

Hopper remained silent and instead nodded at his superior officers. Will turned to Max and nodded at her and Max activated the time displacement field. As the machine was activated, Hopper felt vibrations all around him as he was lifted off his feet and into the center of the machine. The machine started spinning as it prepared to send Hopper through time. A wave of bluish material started forming around Jim. When the machine suddenly stopped spinning, the material burst as Jim felt his body separating from the environment around him, sending him back through time.

2. Los Angeles, 1999

Summary for the Chapter:

Jim Hopper arrives in 1999 and begins his search for Joyce Byers, the woman he is assigned to protect. Meanwhile, the Terminator systematically kills other women named Joyce Byers in its hunt for the mother of its enemy, catching the attention of Lieutenant Powell and his partner Callahan.

Part One: 1999

The alleyway sat abandoned, except for a lone homeless man who was muttering under his breath, talking to someone who existed only in his mind. The homeless man was having a lively conversation with his imaginary friend when suddenly the wind picked up and lightning bolts started flashing around the alley. The homeless man stopped talking and peeked out into the center of the alley. A large circle of energy had started to form about 20 feet off the ground, and the homeless man couldn't figure out what was happening.

Soon, the circle of energy disappeared and a naked man dropped out of the sky and landed with a thud on the ground. It was several seconds before the man woke up from his hard landing, groaning in pain as he sat up.

Jim Hopper opened his eyes and took in his surroundings. He had landed in a dark alleyway that looked similar to every alley he had ever seen in his life. His heart sank as he thought the time displacement field had failed and somehow teleported him to another part of the world in 2050. Hopper got to his feet, grunting as his joints popped. Traveling through time had been painful; Hopper could only describe the pain as like being born again, though he had no idea how he knew this.

Once on his feet, Hopper limped down the alleyway and peered his head around the building, suddenly remembering that he had no clothes on and could be attacked at a moments' notice. He glanced down the street and saw several buildings standing that were brightly

lit. Hopper grinned to himself as he realized the time displacement field was successful; buildings taller than two stories virtually didn't exist in the future due to Skynet destroying them over the years. If multiple buildings were standing, that meant Hopper had successfully gone back through time.

Hopper turned and headed down the alley, searching around for any signs of life. He didn't have to go too far before he stumbled upon the homeless man, who was looking at Hopper as if he wasn't sure he was imagining the naked man.

"Hey buddy, did you just see a real bright light?" the homeless man asked.

Hopper guessed that the homeless man was drunk based on how he was slurring his words and how he was swaying in his spot on the ground. He decided to use this to his advantage.

"No, there was nothing, sir. You must have been seeing things," Hopper replied in a short tone. "Is there any place where I can get some clothes?"

The homeless man suddenly looked fearful and immediately started taking off his pants. His hands were shaking and he started muttering to himself again. Hopper stood watching him impatiently until the homeless man handed over his pants, which Hopper put on immediately. Luckily, the pants fit him.

Suddenly, a car with red and blue lights flashing on top of it pulled up to the back side of the alley, a flashlight shining at Hopper and the homeless man. Hopper squinted as he tried to figure out what was going on when he heard a car door opening and saw a dark figure getting out of the car, calling out to him.

"Hold it right there!" shouted a voice.

Hopper turned away from the homeless man and immediately took off in the opposite direction.

"He's running!" said the driver of the car.

"Hey! I said 'hold it!'" yelled the officer who had gotten out of the car.

The officer gave chase, hurrying past the homeless man, who shouted up at him, "That son of a bitch took my pants!" The officer ignored the homeless man and chased after Hopper, who darted through the alleyways, trying to evade the officer.

Thanks to Hopper's training over the years, he was able to be light on his feet. Not even an approaching vehicle could stop him. Hopper leapt over the hood of the car and slid into a small opening, where the cover of darkness could hide him.

Hopper waited until he saw the police officer walk past the car, his gun in his hand and his flashlight scanning around the alley for Hopper. When the officer turned away from Hopper's hiding spot, Hopper leapt out at the officer and grabbed his arm, reaching for the gun. The officer fired a wild shot and struggled against Hopper for control of the gun. Hopper elbowed the officer in the gut, which freed the gun from the officer's grasp. Hopper pointed the gun at the officer.

"What day is it?" he demanded. "The date!"

"Twelfth, May, Friday," the officer sputtered, clearly fearful of his life with his own gun pointed at him.

"What year?" Hopper shouted.

The officer frowned.

"What?" he said.

Before Hopper could repeat his question, he saw another set of police car lights approaching him and the officer. Hopper bolted away from the officer and ran toward a locked door, which he tried to break. He was unsuccessful, so Hopper shot the lock off and hurried into the building.

Meanwhile, the now weaponless officer turned to his fellow officers who had arrived as back up.

"He's got my gun, let's go get him!" he instructed before he followed Hopper's footsteps into the building.

Hopper ran down the hallway, realizing he had broken into a clothing store of some kind. Although it was pitch black in the store, Hopper could easily find his way around it, thanks to his frequent scouting at night during the war. He kept his head low as he searched around the store for suitable clothing, and heard the officers follow him into the store, their flashlights shining all around the store in their search for Hopper.

Hopper soon found both a jacket and shirt he was sure would fit him. He stayed low as he ran over to the shoe rack and picked out a pair of shoes and compared them to the size of his feet. Once he found a pair that would fit, Hopper hurried over to a photo booth and closed the curtain behind him. He quickly changed into the clothes he had obtained before he picked up the revolver he had taken from the officer and peered outside the photo booth. Seeing a clear path, Hopper hurried away from the booth and toward the escalator that led to the second floor of the store. Hopper hurried up the escalator, barely getting upstairs before an officer walked by the escalator and shined his flashlight up the escalator.

Within moments of glancing around the second floor, Hopper spotted an open window. He hurried to it and climbed back outside. There was a stairwell outside the window, which Hopper jumped onto. The stairwell was right above an empty police car that had its lights flashing. Acting quickly, Hopper jumped over the side of the stairwell and lowered his body before he jumped down to the ground, landing with a grunt. Hopper hurried over to the police car and opened the passenger window, where a shotgun was on the chair. Hopper took the weapon out of the car before he shut the door carefully and hurried out of the alleyway.

Once on the street, Hopper slowed his pace and put the shotgun away. The jacket he had grabbed was an overcoat, which made it easy to conceal that Hopper was carrying the shotgun. Hopper wrapped the jacket over himself to hide the gun and calmly walked down the sidewalk, getting no glances from those who were also walking on the sidewalk. Hopper slowed down as he saw an approaching police car with its siren blaring. The car did not stop, however, and once it had passed him, Hopper glanced to make sure no other cars were approaching before he crossed the street.

Hopper spotted a phone booth across the street and ran to it. The booth was empty, so Hopper hurried inside and grabbed a phone book. He flipped several pages until he reached the end of the list of people with a last name starting with B. He used his finger to scan the page before he landed on his target: Joyce Byers. Hopper scanned the address listing for Joyce before he ripped the page out of the phone book and closed it, leaving the phone booth as quickly as he could.

Joyce Byers was grateful for the cooler temperatures in the mornings during spring. Since she preferred to drive her electric scooter to work, having the cooler temperatures made the drive to work much more pleasant. The cool breeze kept her from overheating, and luckily it wasn't enough to mess up her hair, which she always took great care of in the mornings, hoping to look as nice as possible for her shift.

Joyce drove her scooter up to the restaurant where she worked along with her roommate, Terry Ives. Joyce and Terry had gone to high school together, graduating at the top of their class. While Terry was more of a free spirit, Joyce was a little more disciplined and was trying to figure out what she wanted to do with her life. College was definitely a long-term goal; she knew she wanted to go, just not what she wanted to study. Her gap year was just starting and she was hoping the break from going to classes every day would help her decide what kind of education she wanted and what career she wanted to pursue.

She parked her scooter in her usual parking spot and pulled out the chain to lock it up. Once it was locked in place, Joyce gave her scooter a shove and it didn't budge, meaning she had once again locked it up successfully. She started to walk to the restaurant's front door, passing its mascot as she did.

"Guard it for me, Big Buns," she said to the mascot. Joyce always told the mascot to guard her scooter. It had started as a joke between her and Terry, but now she did it out of habit. If she ever forgot to tell the mascot to guard her scooter, she always had an unpleasant

feeling in her stomach.

Once inside the restaurant, Joyce hurried to the kitchen, where most of the staff was already working and preparing for the lunch shift. Terry was walking past, carrying a tray to another table when she saw Joyce. Terry opened her mouth to speak, but Joyce spoke for her.

"I'm late," she said, correctly interpreting what Terry was going to say.

"Hey, I was too," Terry said with a shrug before she continued walking toward the table she was serving.

Joyce entered the kitchen break room, where one of the early morning servers was sitting enjoying her own cup of coffee. Joyce nodded at her before she grabbed her time card and used it to get on the clock. She hurriedly changed into her waitress uniform and headed outside. She grabbed one of the tickets for orders that were ready and grabbed the food. Joyce hurried over to the assigned table with the order.

Once she had served the customers, Joyce stood up to head back to the kitchen when the sight of a man sitting alone at a table stopped her. The man looked disheveled; his hair was greasy and he definitely needed a shave. He had bags under his eyes that made it look like he hadn't gotten a proper night's sleep in quite a while. Joyce stared at the man and she could have sworn he was staring right back at her. Joyce blinked and walked back to the kitchen and couldn't help feeling that the man was still watching her. She glanced back at the man and saw he was now staring out the window as if observing the most interesting thing on the planet. Joyce shook her head and went back to work, quickly forgetting about the man and focusing only on her work.

The rest of Joyce's first half of her shift went by without incident, though there was a moment where she spilled coffee on a table because she was carrying too much in her hands. And while cleaning the coffee, a child at the neighboring table decided Joyce needed a mashed potato put into the pocket of her apron. When Joyce stared back at the child in shock, Terry had whispered in her ear, amused,

"In a hundred years, who's gonna care?"

By mid-afternoon, Joyce was starving for lunch and took her break. She called back to her shift manager to let him know she was going on break. When she turned around, Joyce was startled when Terry appeared right in front of her, grabbing her quickly.

"Joyce! You gotta come see! It's about you, well sort of!"

Joyce had no idea how to respond to Terry's remarks and instead let Terry drag her to the break room, where several other waitresses were also on their lunch break; they all tended to go on break around this time, when the restaurant's business slowed down after lunch.

"Sit down and listen to this, you are going to love this!" Terry said in a sing-song voice as she helped Joyce into a chair. One of the other waitresses shushed Terry before focusing on the screen.

"What?" Joyce asked. Terry pointed at the TV screen, where a news broadcast was being shown.

"...she was shot several times at close range," said the news anchor. "Police don't have a description of the suspect and they are questioning neighbors who might have witnessed a suspicious character in the neighborhood. Once again, Joyce Byers, wife and mother of two, was found shot to death in her home in southern Los Angeles."

Joyce tuned out the rest of the anchor's words as Terry whispered in her ear.

"You're dead, honey," Terry said sarcastically.

That night, Terry and Joyce stood in their apartment bathroom, both of them getting ready for the evening. Terry had a date with her boyfriend, Matt, and Joyce was going out to dinner with a man named Johnny, who she had met while out at a dance club a few weeks earlier. The two women had their hair up as Terry curled her hair and Joyce dried off her hair from the shower she had taken.

Suddenly the phone started ringing. Terry didn't notice it since she

had her headphones in and was jamming along to the music blasting through them. Joyce put down her towel and left the bathroom to answer the phone that was in Terry's bedroom.

"Hello?" Joyce said in a happy tone.

"First I'm gonna rip the buttons off your blouse one-by-one," said a seductive voice on the other line. Joyce frowned before she realized who was on the phone. "Then run my tongue down your neck to your bare, gleaming breasts. And then slowly...slowly pull your jeans off inch by inch."

As the caller spoke about his fantasy, Joyce found herself laughing quietly, trying to avoid letting the caller hear. She pulled the phone away from her ear and called into the bathroom.

"Terry, it's Matt!" she said, though she wasn't sure Terry could hear her.

"And lick your belly in circles further and further down, and then pull your panties off with my teeth."

"Who is this?" Joyce asked in a serious tone.

She heard shuffling on the other end of the call and she knew Matt was sitting up on his recliner.

"Oh shi....Joyce?" Matt asked. Joyce giggled, covering the receiver of the phone so Matt wouldn't hear her. "God, I'm sorry. I thought you were....can I talk to Terry, please?"

"Sure, Bunky," Joyce replied in an amused tone as she put down the phone and walked back to the bathroom. She tapped Terry on the shoulder and said, "Creep!"

Terry pulled off her headphones and walked into the bedroom and picked up the phone. Joyce smiled to herself as she resumed getting ready for the evening. She was just applying her eyeliner when Terry came back into the bathroom, blushing slightly.

"Creep definitely has one hell of a fantasy, doesn't he?" Joyce asked with a smirk.

"Yeah, he does," Terry replied. "You'd think his dumb ass would know the difference between our voices, but no."

Joyce laughed.

"Yeah, but when he gets all pent up like that, can you blame him?"

The two of them laughed as they continued getting ready for the evening. After about 20 minutes, they were both dressed and made up, ready to have a good time on a Friday night. They left the bathroom after they admired each other's looks. Joyce headed to the kitchen to get a drink while Terry walked over to the phone and checked the voicemail. There was a call from Joyce's mother checking in and asking to call. The next message was more heartbreaking.

"Hey Joyce, this is Johnny," said Joyce's date for the evening. "Listen, something's come up and I'm gonna have to cancel. I'm really sorry. I'll call you in a few days or so. Sorry again."

Joyce looked over at Terry with a disappointed look on her face. Terry was glaring at the answering machine before she looked up at Joyce.

"That bum," she said. "So what if he has a Porsche? He can't treat you like this. It's Friday night, for Christ's sake."

Joyce sighed to herself.

"I'll live," she said.

"I'll break his kneecaps," Terry declared.

Joyce chuckled.

"It's okay," she said before she hurried back to the bathroom to change into something more casual. When she was ready, she saw Terry preparing for her date with Matt, getting food ready and pouring some glasses of wine.

"I'm gonna go get a bite and catch a movie, kiddo," Joyce said.

"Okay," Terry replied.

"You and Matt have a good time."

"We will," Terry said. Then she added as an afterthought, "You too."

"Okay," Joyce said with a grin as she opened the front door and walked outside.

She shut the door and turned around, bumping directly into Matt, who looked like he was waiting for her. Joyce gasped in shock before she realized it was Matt.

"Damn it, Matt!" Joyce shrieked as she smacked Matt in the chest. Matt just chuckled at Joyce before giving her a kiss on the cheek.

Joyce walked away from Matt and the apartment and headed to the parking garage. She got onto her scooter and was about to start it up when she perked up, sensing that someone was watching her. Joyce glanced left and right in the parking garage, but it seemed deserted. It was certainly silent and eerie, but since she didn't see anyone, Joyce decided to shrug off the feeling and get going. She started up her scooter and pulled out of her parking spot and toward the garage's exit. Joyce did not notice the car following her that was driven by the man who she had seen at the restaurant earlier that day.

Lieutenant Calvin Powell of the Los Angeles Police Department wasn't the typical police officer. Being a Black man already made him stand out amongst other officers, but being the commanding officer of one of the department's most elite units made him stand out even more. His personality was also of note. Unlike officers who were quick to their tempers and were often shouting commands at other officers and at criminals, Powell was much more soft-spoken. He rarely raised his voice and he was known for his dry sense of humor, which was delivered deadpan nearly every time he spoke.

As a violent criminal was struggling against two of Powell's officers, Powell was chewing sunflower seeds calmly, waiting for the events of his Friday night to begin. He stepped aside to let the officers carry

the criminal away and merely kept chewing on his sunflower seeds while the officers struggled with the criminal.

"Hey, got one for you!" came the voice of Powell's second-in-command, Phill Callahan.

If ever there were two officers who were polar opposites, it was Powell and Callahan. Callahan was known for his quick temper, especially among younger officers and for being impatient when cases didn't proceed as quickly as he would like. He was also known as the officer who didn't want to do any of the brunt work on cases, preferring to let the junior officers do the dirty work while he waited.

Callahan handed Powell a folder containing photos from a crime scene from earlier that afternoon.

"What have you got?" Powell asked in a somewhat bored tone of voice.

"Dead girl," Callahan explained as he walked alongside Powell.

"I can see that," Powell replied, staring at the crime scene photos that showed a bloody body on the ground with multiple gunshot wounds.

"Joyce Ann Byers, shot multiple times at close range after answering the front door. She died almost instantly at the scene."

"You know these work," Powell said, taking off his reading glasses and waving them at Callahan, who handed him another set of photos. "What's this?"

"Dead girl, number two. Same shit. Guy enters the house, opens fire on her at close range and shoots her multiple times, leaving her in a pool of blood," Callahan explained.

"I assume there's a point to all this?"

"Check out the name."

Powell glanced down at the crime scene photo and saw the name. "Joyce Louise...Byers," he said, realizing the similarity between the

victims' names. "Is this right?" he asked, glancing up at Callahan, who nodded. "You're kidding me!"

"The press is gonna have a field day with this one, boss," Callahan said. "And there's one more girl listed in the phone book."

"Just perfect," Powell grunted, sighing to himself. "Okay. First, try and get a hold of the next girl. If you don't get her, try sending a unit over to the apartment and find out what's going on and tell her we need her to come here at once."

For the next half hour, Lieutenant Powell familiarized himself with the aspects of both crime scenes while Callahan handled getting a hold of the next Joyce Byers listed in the phone book and sent a unit to her apartment. Powell found that both crimes were carried out in a similar matter. Both victims had opened their front doors to their killer and were killed just inside their homes. The killer had also gone overboard in his execution of the women; both of them were shot multiple times, including in the chest and the head, suggesting that whoever killed them wanted to make sure the job was done. There was something mechanical about the murders, but Powell couldn't quite put his hand on it.

There was also no apparent connection between the victims other than their names. Both of them lived on different sides of Los Angeles and it was unlikely they would have crossed paths regularly due to their different lifestyles. When Powell had exhausted all of his theories on a connection between the victims, he decided to join Callahan in one of the investigative rooms the police used for crimes such as these that would take longer to investigate.

Powell stood up from his office chair and headed to the door, carrying the files on both murders. When he opened his office door and headed into the hallway, he was nearly bombarded by a crowd of reporters and photographers. It seemed that every television and radio station and every newspaper in the area had arrived at the police station, looking for an update on the murders.

"Lieutenant Powell, what can you tell us about the murders? What are the connections between these two women besides the similar names?" asked a reporter who was the closest to Powell.

"Look, guys, nothing would please me more than to give you some information you can provide to your readers and viewers," Powell said with an air of annoyance. "Unfortunately, I don't have much for you right now. Hell, you guys probably know more than me. I'll be giving a statement shortly."

Powell tried to push past all of the reporters and was barely successful, managing to dodge not only the reporters but their questions as well. He opened the door into the investigative room where Callahan was working and quickly shut the door behind him, letting out a sigh of relief that the sound of the reporters was quickly drained out.

Callahan smirked at Powell, who ignored his partner and instead headed straight for the coffee pot. He started pouring himself a cup of black coffee, knowing the night ahead was going to be a long one.

"That coffee's two hours cold," Callahan remarked.

"Mm-hmm," said Powell as he took a sip of the coffee. Though it was cold, it functioned in keeping him awake and alert for the next few hours. Powell then pulled a cigarette out of his pocket and lit it up, starting to take some puffs. "Did you reach the next girl yet?"

Callahan shook his head.

"No, I've called a few times and haven't gotten an answer."

"Did you send a unit?"

"I sent a unit, there's no answer at the door and the apartment manager is already gone for the weekend."

"Call her," Powell instructed.

"I just called her," Callahan retorted.

"Call her again."

Callahan huffed as he picked up the phone and started dialing the phone number for the next Joyce Byers listed in the phone book.

"Give me a cigarette," Powell said, holding out his right hand.

Callahan reached into his shirt pocket and pulled out a pack of cigarettes and gave it to Powell, who took it before realizing he already had a cigarette in his left hand. Powell slowly put down the carton of cigarettes before taking a puff from the one already in his hand.

The phone in the apartment rang once again. Matt looked up from having sex with Terry and glanced at it, seeing an unknown number was calling again. Matt ignored the phone call and to make sure Terry didn't try to answer the phone, he turned up the volume in her headphones. Terry was bouncing her head along to the music with her eyes closed; she was enamored both with the music and by Matt. Matt smirked as he saw Terry jamming to the music and he bent his head down to give her a kiss again as the phone stopped ringing.

Callahan sighed as the phone at Joyce Byers' apartment once again went to voicemail.

"Same shit," he said as he took the receiver away from his ear and set it back down.

"I can hear it now," said Powell. "He's going to be called the goddamned phone book killer."

Callahan nodded.

"I hate these press cases, especially the weird press cases," he said before he stuck a cigarette into his mouth and lit it.

Meanwhile, Powell started to straighten his tie and made for the door.

"Where you going?" Callahan asked.

"I'm gonna make a statement," Powell said as he finished straightening his tie. "Maybe make these jackals work for us. If I can get on the tube by 11:00, maybe she'll call us. Well, how do I look?"

Callahan looked over Powell's appearance with an amused expression on his face.

"Like shit, boss," Callahan said with a smirk.

"Yo mama," said Powell before he turned around and opened the door. As if they had been waiting for him, the entire press corps stood outside the door with cameras and voice recorders at the ready.

Joyce sat in a small pizzeria that was located near her apartment. The server had just bought her pizza of choice, a spinach pizza, to her table and set it down in front of Joyce. Joyce was slicing the pizza and taking off her first slice when she was distracted by a news report from the TV located at the bar of the pizzeria.

"This just in: police have announced the name of the victim in the second of two execution-style murders, which took place today," said the news anchor. "Incredibly, the names of the two victims are virtually identical. Two hours ago, 35-year-old Joyce Louise Byers was found dead..."

Joyce turned at the sound of her name and saw the news report. She slowly walked over to the bar to get a better listen at the report.

"Can we turn this off?" asked one patron.

"Sure," said the bartender, who went to turn off the TV.

"Don't touch it!" Joyce shrieked as she ran up to the bar.

The bartender complied and stepped away from the TV as the news report continued.

"Now, police are refusing to speculate on the apparent similarity between these shooting deaths and no other connection between the two victims has been established as of yet. Of course, we'll have more on this late-breaking story as it becomes available."

The news report carried on to the next story and Joyce found herself shrinking away from the bar. The patrons around the bar went back to what they were doing and the bartender changed the channel. Joyce stepped away and immediately headed to the nearby phone at the back of the pizzeria. Joyce picked up the phone and started to dial 911, but hesitated when she realized she didn't hear a dial tone. Joyce attempted to restart the call before she noticed there was a small piece of paper attached to the phone. Joyce opened up the folded piece of paper and saw it said "out of order."

Joyce slammed the phone down in frustration as she started to breathe faster. She closed her eyes and took a few breaths before she stepped away from the phone and headed outside the pizzeria. She started walking down the sidewalk, hoping she could find a place where she could use a phone. Joyce didn't notice the man from her restaurant was standing in a nearby alleyway, as if he were waiting for Joyce.

When Joyce walked past the alleyway, the man stepped out from it and started to follow Joyce. He kept his distance from Joyce, but he followed the same path as Joyce.

Joyce seemed to sense that someone was following her and she glanced behind her. Her heart sank as she realized the man from the restaurant seemed to be following her. It was clear to Joyce the man was trying to look incognito but he was failing miserably at it. Joyce returned to face forward and saw there was a club of sorts coming up on her left. She hurried into the building and immediately hid behind a wall inside it, out of view from the front windows.

From her hiding spot, Joyce peered outside and saw the man from the restaurant still walking outside and he seemed to be trying to look into the club. But the man didn't slow his pace and instead walked past the club and continued down the sidewalk. Joyce breathed a sigh of relief as she realized the man was not following her. She then emerged from her hiding spot and headed to the line to get into the main room of the club.

When it was her turn to be admitted, Joyce leaned forward so she could be heard over the loud music of the club.

"You have a phone?" Joyce asked, nearly shouting.

"It's in the back," replied the worker.

Joyce made to walk to the back and use the phone.

"Hey!" the worker shouted, causing Joyce to pause. "It's \$4.50 to get in."

Joyce reached into her pocket and pulled out a \$5 bill. She handed it to the worker, who slid two quarters, which Joyce hurriedly put away before she hurried into the main area of the club. She had to walk past dozens of dancers and other patrons before she reached the back of the club and found a payphone. She hurriedly put some change into the pay phone and dialed 911. The phone rang twice before an automated message played.

"You have reached the Los Angeles Police Department's Emergency number," said the voice. "All of our lines are busy at the moment. If you need a car sent to your location, please stay on the line."

Frustrated, Joyce hung up the phone with a slam, sighing to herself and shaking slightly as tears started forming in her eyes.

Terry sat up in bed, stretching as she stood up. She glanced over at Matt and saw that he had fallen asleep. She grinned to herself; Matt was always exhausted after they made love and usually took a nap. Terry bent down and gave Matt a kiss on the forehead before she crept to the bedroom door and opened it as quietly as possible. She shut the door behind her and started walking down the hallway to the kitchen, dancing slightly as she listened to the music blaring through her headphones.

Terry walked into the kitchen and began pulling items out of the fridge in order to make a meal for her and Matt, jamming along to the music as she did. If Terry had looked out the window, she might have seen the man outside who was approaching the apartment slowly.

This man, however, was not a man. It was a machine disguised as a

man: a Terminator. The Terminator was honing in on his final target -- the final Joyce Byers listed in the phone book the Terminator has sifted through after it arrived in 1999. Somehow, the Terminator knew it was about to complete its mission. Nothing had happened when he killed the other women named Joyce Byers, and the Terminator knew its internal systems would confirm if its mission had been completed.

The Terminator slowly walked toward the apartment where Joyce Byers lived. Much of the apartment was dark except for a light coming from the kitchen, where the Terminator observed a woman making food and dancing. Although the woman appeared to be alone, the Terminator knew it couldn't risk a witness to it carrying out its mission, so it started walking around the exterior of the apartment, peering into the windows for signs of another person. In the bedroom furthest from the kitchen, the Terminator spotted a man sleeping on the bed.

The Terminator's CPU instructed it to eliminate the man before proceeding to attack its main target. The Terminator carefully sneaked into the bedroom through the sliding door, which had been left unlocked. The Terminator walked over to the bed, staring at the man. Just then, a breeze blew into the room, which woke the man up.

"Whoa!" Matt exclaimed when he opened his eyes and saw the Terminator standing over him. Matt slid off the bed fast enough to avoid being punched in the face by the Terminator.

Matt grabbed the floor lamp next to the bed and prepared to use it as a weapon.

"Don't make me bust you up, man!" Matt said with confidence as he swung at the Terminator.

The Terminator barely reacted as Matt hit him with the lamp and dropped it. The Terminator then picked up Matt and threw him through the sliding glass door, shattering the glass. Matt was able to recover quickly, having avoided getting cut up by the glass and got back up to fight the Terminator again. The Terminator was ready, however, and picked Matt up and threw him against the closet

mirror, shattering it.

Matt got back up and tried to tackle the Terminator, but since the Terminator's exoskeleton weighed so much, he was only able to push the Terminator back a few inches. The Terminator recovered from Matt's final attempt at an attack and picked him up again, this time throwing him against a vase on a stand, shattering both of them.

Meanwhile, Terry was finishing making sandwiches for her and Matt, oblivious to the commotion into the bedroom due to the loud volume of music blaring through her headphones. Once everything was ready, Terry picked up the plate and started walking back to the bedroom, dancing slightly to the music but doing her best to make sure nothing spilled onto the floor.

Just as Terry was about to reach the bedroom, Matt's body came hurling through the door. Terry gasped loudly and the plate of food and drink she was carrying went flying to the ground as she covered her mouth with her hands. Terry looked down and saw blood running down Matt's back and saw that he wasn't moving. He was dead.

Terry screamed as she realized Matt had been killed. A second later, the Terminator came through the bedroom door, pushing the broken door out of its way and brandishing its gun. Terry screamed again and turned to run away as the Terminator pushed itself fully out of the bedroom.

The Terminator aimed its gun, which had a laser pointer on it for maximum accuracy, at Terry's retreating back and fired a single shot at her. Terry collapsed to the ground, groaning in pain, but she wasn't dead. The Terminator slowly advanced down the hallway as Terry tried to crawl away, blood pooling out of her back from where she had been shot. Terry glanced behind her as the Terminator advanced and she cried out as she tried to crawl away.

Before Terry could get any further, the Terminator pointed its gun down at Terry and fired several more shots at her, killing her quickly. When the Terminator had spent all its bullets, the phone suddenly rang. The Terminator whipped around, aiming the gun toward a possible intruder before realizing it was simply the phone ringing.

The Terminator turned back around and bent down to check on Terry. It quickly deduced that Terry was dead, but it somehow knew that it still hadn't succeeded in its mission. The Terminator stood back up and started loading its gun again when suddenly the voicemail from the caller started playing.

"Terry, this is Joyce, pick up if you're there!"

The Terminator whipped around, staring intently at the phone as it realized it was correct: it hadn't yet succeeded in its mission and Joyce Byers was calling home. The Terminator slowly walked over to the phone as Joyce continued leaving a message.

"I'm at this place on Pico Boulevard called Tech Noir!" Joyce said, practically screaming into the phone as loud music played in the background. "I'm really scared! I think that there's somebody after me. Uh, I hope that you play this back soon, I need you and Matt to come pick me up as soon as possible. The police keep transferring me around. I'm gonna give them another try. The number here is 555-9175. Call me, kiddo, I need your help."

Joyce hung the phone call just as the Terminator reached the stand where the phone was located. The Terminator opened up the drawer underneath the phone and shuffled through it, trying to find anything it could to identify Joyce Byers before it proceeded to Joyce's location. Although the Terminator had no qualms about killing other people, needless bloodshed was something the Terminator did not wish to engage in. Soon, the Terminator found a small phone book and opened it.

The Terminator flipped through a few pages of the phone book before closing it and putting it in its coat pocket. He continued rustling through items before it found a high school ID card and picked it up. The card showed that it belonged to Joyce Byers and the Terminator got its first look at its target, realizing it had found her and would now be able to carry out its mission.

The phone rang and Callahan quickly picked it up, hoping it was

Joyce Byers trying to get a hold of the homicide unit.

"Callahan," he answered.

"Officer Callahan, this is Joyce Byers. I'm trying to get in touch with someone in charge."

"Just a moment," Callahan said, putting the phone on hold and poking his head out into the hallway, where Powell was still talking to reporters. He motioned for Powell to come back into the room and Powell quickly thanked the reporters before he turned around and followed Callahan back into the room they were working in.

"It's her," Callahan said, handing the phone to Powell and taking it off hold.

"Joyce Byers?" Powell asked.

"Yes," said Joyce on the other line.

"It's Lieutenant Powell."

"Look, Lieutenant, don't put me on hold and don't transfer me to another department!" Joyce demanded, shouting into the phone.

Powell frowned as he realized that Joyce obviously wasn't at home. He could hear loud music playing in the background and realized she must have gone out for the night, which is why there was no answer at home.

"Don't worry, I won't," Powell said in a reassuring voice. "Now, just relax. Can you tell me where you are?"

Powell motioned to Callahan, who pulled a pen out of his shirt pocket and handed it to him.

"I'm in this bar called Tech Noir," said Joyce.

"Yeah, I know it. It's on Pico," said Powell as he took note of where Joyce was. "Are you all right?"

"Yeah," said Joyce breathlessly. "But I don't wanna leave. I think

there's a guy following me."

"All right, now listen Miss Byers, listen very carefully: You're in a public place, so you'll be safe til we get there. But stay visible. Don't go outside or even to the restroom. I'll have a car there in a hot minute."

"Okay," Joyce said before hanging up the phone.

Powell put the phone down and sighed to himself.

"Where's she at?" Callahan asked.

"She's at the bar on Pico, Tech Noir," Powell replied. "Get a unit out there as quickly as possible."

Callahan nodded.

"What about the apartment?" he asked. "The unit I sent there responded to a call, should I send another?"

"Yeah, send one there and pick up her roommate. God knows if this guy hasn't already been by that apartment looking for her. The roommate might be in danger."

Notes for the Chapter:

Moving right along with this story! The showdown between Hopper and The Terminator will happen in the next chapter.

Hope you're all enjoying this story so far! I'm remember just how much I was in Terminator Mode while writing this story, constantly watching scenes from the first two films as I rewrote those scenes for this story and putting the Stranger Things characters into the major roles. You can imagine how hard it was not to type the original characters' names, especially Sarah Connor when I was writing the Joyce scenes.

Stay tuned for more soon!

3. Fight and Escape

Summary for the Chapter:

Things come to a head at the club where Joyce is trying to outrun the man she suspects is following her.

Notes for the Chapter:

Hello, my lovelies! Apologies for the wait in between chapters; life got in the way as it does!

As a little treat for you, I also plan to publish the next chapter tonight after I do a readthrough and do some edits to it. Stay tuned!

Joyce hung up the phone call after speaking with Lieutenant Powell. His reassuring words had calmed her down slightly and she realized he had a point: Since she was in a public place, it was more difficult for someone to try and hurt her with so many people around to witness it happening. Joyce sat back down at the table she had claimed and decided to wait until she saw a police officer searching around before she would stand up again. Joyce started to people watch and glanced around the dance floor for something interesting. She bumped her arm into the cup she had been drinking from and she turned to stop it to no avail. Luckily her drink was empty, so nothing spilled onto the floor.

Joyce bent down to pick up the cup from the ground. If she hadn't bent down she might have noticed the Terminator walking around the dance floor, glancing around for a sign of Joyce. Joyce sat back up and started looking around the dance floor again and felt her breath hitch when she glanced at the bar. The man from her restaurant, who she thought had been following her, was sitting at the bar. Joyce was relieved that the man didn't seem to be watching her as he had before, but with everything going on, a part of her panicked slightly at seeing him again.

Just then, the Terminator turned around from where it was walking

and spotted Joyce. His eyebrows furrowed as he saw his target and he started walking over to Joyce slowly. Joyce didn't notice the Terminator approaching, instead tried to keep her breathing steady at seeing the man at the bar. Just as the Terminator was a few feet from her table, Joyce suddenly turned to look at him.

The man glanced back at Joyce and saw the Terminator approaching her and reaching into its jacket. He opened his own jacket and pulled out the shotgun he had obtained the night before and cocked it.

Meanwhile, the Terminator had pulled out its handgun and cocked it before shining its laser pointer directly at the top of Joyce's head. Joyce froze as she realized she was about to be killed.

The man pushed several bar patrons out of the way, some of whom were scrambling to get away because they saw his shotgun. Before the Terminator could get off a shot, Hopper fired on him.

The Terminator stumbled and turned to see the source of the gunshot as Hopper fired on him again four more times, pushing the Terminator away from Joyce. The Terminator fell onto its back and lay immobile for several seconds. Meanwhile, patrons of Tech Noir were screaming and scrambling to get away from the gunshots. Joyce had fallen out of her chair and was now struggling to get to her feet to run away, grateful that the man at the bar had stopped her from getting shot.

The Terminator's fingers twitched and suddenly it was back on its feet. The Terminator pulled a Uzi gun out of its jacket and aimed at Hopper, who dived behind the bar as the Terminator unleashed a barrage of bullets at him. When the Terminator paused, Hopper sat up and fired at the Terminator, missing by about a mile before the Terminator continued firing at him.

The Terminator then turned away from Hopper and glanced around for a sign of Joyce. In seconds, he spotted her running away with another woman and fired on the woman behind Joyce, who groaned and came crashing into Joyce, sending both of them to the ground. Hopper jumped out from behind the bar, reloading his shotgun as he moved, and the Terminator fired on him again, causing Hopper to jump and roll into a new hiding spot behind a table.

Once the Terminator was out of bullets, it returned its focus to Joyce and slowly walked toward her. Joyce was struggling to get out from under the woman's body as the Terminator approached. She had just pushed the other woman's body away from her as the Terminator reached her, reloading his machine gun and pointing it at Joyce.

Suddenly, the man ran out from his hiding spot and fired at the Terminator, who stumbled backward. Hopper cocked the shotgun and fired again. Once. Twice. Three times. Four. On the final shot, the Terminator flew backward through the front window of Tech Noir, shattering it, and landing on the pavement outside, where several people were running to escape the gunfire.

The man bent down to Joyce, quickly examining her to make sure he didn't see any major injuries.

"Come with me if you wanna live," he said to Joyce.

Joyce, meanwhile, was staring at the broken window, where she saw the Terminator getting to its feet. Her eyes widened in shock at seeing the Terminator get back up and she froze for a moment.

"Come on!" the man shouted, grabbing onto Joyce's hand and pulling her to her feet. The two turned and ran toward the back exit as the Terminator gave chase after walking back inside through the broken window.

The man quickly pushed open the back door and pulled Joyce into an alleyway and let go of her hand as they ran down the alley. Seconds later, the Terminator exited Tech Noir, hot on their heels. Hopper was reloading his shotgun as they ran and Joyce couldn't help but think that it was clear Hopper was used to running and reloading. She knew that could only mean one of two things: this man was either a cop or a soldier.

But Joyce didn't have time to consider either of these scenarios as the man grabbed her by the shoulder and pulled her toward a car. The man opened the car door and used it as a shield of sorts for them to hide behind while the man fired his shotgun twice at the exhaust of a nearby car, which caused the car to explode. Before Joyce could react, the man pushed Joyce into the car and he got in with her,

shutting the door and sliding over to the driver's side of the car and starting it.

Just then there was movement in the flames and Joyce saw the other man flying through the air before landing on the hood of the car, flames all on parts of his body quickly going out. Joyce screamed before the second man punched through the window and grabbed Joyce's shirt as the car was reversing. The man who had rescued her grabbed onto Joyce and kept her from being pulled out of the car as he reversed through the alley.

When they reached the end of the alley, an approaching police car nearly rammed into the car and slammed on its brakes to avoid them. The man swerved and hit the side of another car, which caused the second man to roll off the hood and to the ground. Joyce glanced at her rescuer, who remained silent as he threw the car into drive and sped off from the bar.

Meanwhile, the officer who had arrived got out of his patrol car and glanced at the escaping car, trying to commit a description of it to memory. The officer looked over at the man who had fallen to the ground and saw he wasn't moving. The officer then reached into his patrol car and pulled out his radio.

"This is One-L-Nineteen, I've got a hit and felony," the officer said. "Suspect vehicle is a late model gray Ford headed westbound on Seventh. He's really moving. I'm gonna need an ambulance at Seventh and Broadway right now."

Just as the officer finished his report, he sensed someone behind him and turned to see the Terminator approaching him on foot, the fall from the car seemingly unaffecting him.

"Hey, hold it!" the officer demanded.

The Terminator ignored him and instead grabbed the officer and shoved him into the side of the vehicle, making the officer's head hit the vehicle, which knocked him unconscious. The Terminator then tossed the officer's body aside before it got into the car. It checked the shotgun that was left inside the car before it put the car into drive and sped off after its prey.

"Hold on," Joyce's rescuer instructed her as he turned down another alleyway, trying to put as many miles as possible between them and Joyce's would-be killer.

Joyce was too shell-shocked over the whole situation and instead of responding, she just stared out the passenger window with a blank expression on her face. Once her rescuer had turned the car back onto a street, he glanced over at her.

"Are you injured?" he demanded. "Are you shot?"

Rather than reply, Joyce moved like she was going to try and escape from the car. Her rescuer grabbed her shirt roughly and held her in place so she couldn't move.

"Do exactly what I say! Exactly" he shouted. "Don't move unless I say. Don't make a sound unless I say. Do you understand?" Joyce didn't respond, so he yelled louder. "DO YOU UNDERSTAND?"

Joyce shrieked and nodded.

"Please don't hurt me," she begged.

Her rescuer violently drove the car down several side streets, narrowly avoiding hitting other cars as he did. When he was back on another main road, the man let go of Joyce.

"I'm here to help you," he said. "I'm Hopper. Sergeant Tech-Com, DN38416, assigned to protect you. You've been targeted for termination."

Termination? thought Joyce, not sure if she believed what this man -- Hopper -- was telling her. *Who would want to terminate her? And why? What had she done to deserve being targeted for termination?*

Hopper continued driving erratically, doing his best to avoid hitting other cars. Privately, Joyce thought it would be easier for him to drive if he were driving with the headlights on, but she didn't say anything to him. After a few moments, though, Joyce couldn't bear not knowing what exactly was going on.

"This is a mistake," she said. "I didn't do anything."

"No, but you will," Hopper replied. "It's very important that you live."

"This isn't true. How could that man just get up after you just..."

Hopper cut her off.

"He's not a man -- a machine. Terminator. Cyberdyne Systems Model 101."

"A machine? Like a robot?"

"Not a robot. A cyborg. Cybernetic organism."

"No, he was bleeding," Joyce insisted.

"Just a second," said Hopper as a police car with its lights flashing pulled up beside them. "Get your head down!" Hopper yelled, pushing Joyce's head so it wouldn't be seen by the officer.

Hopper tried to run the cop car off the road, but to no avail. He then turned into an alleyway to try and lose the cop, but the cop got tight on his tail. Hopper kept driving until he slammed on his breaks. The cop car slowed down, turning to avoid rear-ending Hopper and became trapped by a trash bin. Hopper reversed the car and slammed it into the cop's car before speeding off.

Hopper drove the car erratically around again before he spotted a parking garage and turned into it. He smashed through the parking garage's barrier and drove inside, looking around for somewhere to park.

"All right, listen," he said to Joyce. "The Terminator's an infiltration unit: part man, part machine. Underneath, it's a hyperalloy combat chassis, microprocessor-controlled. Fully armored; very tough. But outside, it's living tissue: flesh, skin, hair, blood, grown for the cyborgs."

"Look, Hopper, I don't know what you want from..."

"Pay attention!" Hopper interrupted. "I gotta ditch this car," he added

as an afterthought.

Hopper finally slowed the car down and pulled it into an empty parking spot. He turned the car off before he turned to face Joyce.

"The 600 series had rubber skin," Hopper said. "We spotted them easily. But these are new. They look human: sweat, bad breath, everything. Very hard to spot. I had to wait till he moved on you before I could zero him."

Joyce huffed.

"Look, I am not stupid, you know," she said in a frustrated tone. "They cannot make things like that yet."

"Not yet," Hopper said, nodding. "Not for about 40 years."

Joyce's eyes narrowed at Hopper.

"Are you saying it's from the future?" she asked.

"One possible future," Hopper said, turning away from Joyce and staring at the window for a moment before he looked at Joyce again. "From your point of view, I don't know tech stuff."

There was a beat before Joyce spoke again.

"Then you're from the future too, is that right?"

"Right," Hopper said nodding.

"Right," Joyce said before she turned to try and get out of the car and away from Hopper. She struggled against Hopper grabbing her shirt again and she gave up trying to escape and instead bit Hopper's arm. Hopper grimaced as Joyce bit him. She soon stopped biting him and went to try and punch Hopper, but he grabbed her hand and stopped her.

"Cyborgs don't feel pain," he said. "I do. Don't do that again."

"Please just let me go," Joyce said weakly.

"Listen and understand!" Hopper said roughly. "That Terminator is out there. It can't be bargained with. It can't be reasoned with. It doesn't feel pity, or remorse, or fear. And it absolutely will not stop...EVER! Until you are dead."

Joyce considered Hopper's words as she let her guard down again.

"Can you stop it?" she asked, closed to tears.

"I don't know," Hopper said, letting go of Joyce. "With these weapons, I don't know."

The Terminator continued driving around in the stolen cop's car, glancing around for any sign of his targets. He had successfully impersonated the police officer when the dispatcher called for the patrol car's location and the dispatcher had told the Terminator to keep an eye out of the suspect vehicle. The Terminator had heard reports of sightings of the gray Ford that the police were looking for, but every time the Terminator attempted to intercept the Ford, it was too late.

Just then, the Terminator's attention was captured by a new report on the police radio.

"All units, all units, please be advised, suspect vehicle has been spotted in a parking garage near Fourth and Lincoln."

The Terminator hurriedly slammed on the car's brakes and whipped the car around before it threw its foot down onto the pedal and sped toward the parking garage.

Hopper led Joyce through the parking garage, both of them keeping low due to the police cars patrolling around the parking garage in a search for them. Hopper was holding Joyce's hand and Joyce couldn't help worrying if her hands were sweaty.

Hopper eventually spotted a blue Cadillac a few feet away that had windows rolled down. He dragged Joyce over to it and reached inside the car to unlock the door. Joyce got into the car first and slid over to the passenger side before Hopper got in, too, and quietly shut the door, making as little noise as possible.

Now that they were out of earshot of the police officers, Joyce decided to ask the question that had been on her mind ever since Hopper told her about the Terminator.

"Hopper," Joyce whispered. "Why me? Why does it want me?"

Hopper took a deep breath before responding. It was clear to Joyce that whatever he was about to reveal was a somewhat painful subject.

"There was a nuclear war," Hopper replied. "It happens several decades from now." He looked around the parking garage, gesturing vaguely to it. "All this, this whole place, everything, it's gone. Just gone. There were survivors. Here, there. Nobody even knew who started it. It was the machines, Joyce."

"I don't understand," Joyce said, frowning.

"Defense network computers. New...powerful...hooked into everything, trusted to run it all. They say it got smart, a new order of intelligence. Then it saw all people as a threat, not just the ones on the other side. Decided our fate in a microsecond: extermination."

"Did you see this war?" Joyce asked.

Before Hopper could respond, he sank lower in his seat, flinching because of an approaching cop car with an officer shining his light near the car. Joyce got lower in her seat, holding her breath and hoping she wasn't making a sound. After several seconds, the car pulled away and Hopper sat up slightly.

"No," he said. "I grew up after. In the ruins...starving...hiding from H-K's."

"H-K's?"

"Hunter killers. Patrol machines built in automated factories. Most of us were rounded up, put in camps for orderly disposal."

Hopper lifted his sleeve and showed Joyce a mark on his arm.

"This is burned by laser scan," he explained. "Some of us were kept alive...to work...loading bodies. The disposal units ran night and day. We were that close to going out forever."

Now as Hopper spoke, Joyce could see a sparkle in his eyes, though she wasn't sure why.

"But there were two men who taught us to fight, to storm the wire of the camps, to smash those metal motherfuckers into junk. They turned it around. They brought us back from the brink. Their names are Byers."

Joyce's eyes widened in shock.

"Jonathan and Will Byers," Hopper said. "Your sons, Joyce. Your unborn sons."

Hopper turned away from Joyce, reloading his shotgun before he used it to break off the ignition of the car. Joyce was baffled by Hopper's revelation. She had always known if she was going to have children, and they were boys, their names would be Jonathan and Will. She wasn't sure why she knew this, but it had always been a thought in her mind. And there was no way Hopper would know this, considering that Joyce had never told anyone what she would name her children.

Hopper then started to hot-wire the car. Once he got it started, Joyce glanced to the right and saw one of the police cars come to a stop. She instinctively leaned down just as Hopper glanced at the stopped car and saw the Terminator in the driver's seat. Hopper ducked down just as the Terminator cocked its shotgun and fired at Joyce and Hopper's car, shattering the passenger window. Hopper stepped hard on the gas, causing the tires to screech before the car took off and Hopper started driving.

The Terminator started driving its own car, firing again at Joyce and

Hopper. None of the bullets hit Joyce or Hopper, but the car took some damage as they kept driving through the parking garage. Hopper leaned over Joyce and fired a few shots back at the Terminator, shattering a headlight and damaging one of the patrol lights on the top of the car.

Eventually the two cars came to a head and Hopper reacted quickly, ramming his car into the Terminator's patrol car, sending it toward a parked car and jamming it in place. Hopper sped off and headed for the parking garage's exit. The Terminator reversed from its position and quickly took off after its targets.

Hopper's relief didn't last long as the Terminator quickly reached them again. Both cars were speeding down the road, the Terminator firing multiple times at Joyce and Hopper, causing more damage to their car. While approaching an underground tunnel underneath a highway, Hopper decided to change tactics and turned the car toward the tunnel. The Terminator followed closely on their heels.

As they sped through the tunnel, Hopper continued to try and run the Terminator off the road, but the Terminator seemed to be interpreting his moves. When his latest attempt failed, Hopper yelled at Joyce.

"Drive!" he shouted before leaning out of the driver's side window.

Joyce leaned over and took control of the steering wheel while Hopper pointed his shotgun at the Terminator's car and fired. He fired several shots at the Terminator, and he could see the Terminator flinching as it was hit by his shots.

"Hopper! Hopper!" Joyce shouted, seeing the road they were on was coming to an end and they were going to crash directly into a wall. Hopper didn't respond, still firing on the Terminator, so Joyce threw the car's transmission into park, causing the car to come to a screeching halt.

Meanwhile, the Terminator poked its head out of the window of its car just before it crashed into the wall that Joyce and Hopper were making a beeline for just moments earlier. The car came to a stop and the passenger door came flying off due to the impact of the crash. At

the tunnel's entrance, multiple police cars were turning into the tunnel, their patrol lights flashing and their sirens blaring.

Hopper was trying desperately to get the car started again before the police reached them. He was unsuccessful so Hopper changed tactics and reached for his shotgun and the driver's side door.

"No, Hopper, no! No! No! No!" Joyce shouted, grabbing onto Hopper's arm and preventing him from exiting the vehicle. "They'll kill you!"

The arriving officers had come to a stop near Joyce and Hopper's car and were getting out of their car with their guns drawn and pointed at them.

"You in the Cadillac, let me see your hands!" one officer shouted.

Joyce and Hopper both raised their hands as they realized there was no way they were going to get away.

"Get out of the car!" the officer instructed.

Hopper obeyed the officer and got out of the car, his arms still raised.

"Get down on the ground!"

Hopper complied and dropped to his knees as another officer came around to Joyce's side of the car and opened the door.

"Step out of the car, ma'am," he said roughly, pulling Joyce out of the car. Joyce stumbled out of the car with her hands raised and the officer hesitated when he turned Joyce around and saw the expression on her face. "Ma'am, are you all right? Did that man hurt you?"

Joyce shook her head.

"No, he stopped the Term...the other man from shooting me at Tech Noir," Joyce said.

"Tech Noir?" the officer replied, frowning. "Wait a minute, are you saying you're Joyce Byers?"

Joyce nodded.

"The Joyce Byers who was supposed to wait for a police officer to arrive at the bar?"

"Look, I had to go with Hopper! He's the one who stopped the other man from killing me! What else was I going to do?"

The officer sighed.

"I'm sorry, ma'am, you're right," he said. "But that's still no excuse for evading the police and causing a chase like that. We're going to take you both down to the station and clear all of this up. You're not in any trouble, Miss Byers. We just wanna make sure that you're okay."

"What about the T....other man?" Joyce asked.

The officer turned and looked at the officers who had approached the Terminator's patrol car. They had their guns raised as they approached the car. Joyce squinted and nearly gasped when she saw there was nobody sitting in the driver's seat.

4. At the Police Station

Summary for the Chapter:

Joyce and Hopper are both questioned at the police station about the events of the evening. Meanwhile, The Terminator patches itself up and prepares for its next move.

Joyce sat at Lieutenant Powell's desk, crying slightly to herself. Lieutenant Powell had told her about Terri and Matt being killed in their home and that it was likely it had been done by the Terminator, or whoever the man at the bar was. But that didn't explain how the man had gotten up twice after Hopper shot him and how he survived that car explosion and didn't break his hand when he punched it through the window. And it didn't explain how he was able to get away so quickly after crashing the police car.

With all of the uncertainty combined with her grief over Terri and Matt, Joyce had started crying uncontrollably, prompting Lieutenant Powell to leave the room to give her some privacy and fetch something for Joyce to drink to try and calm her down.

Joyce had spent several minutes crying and she eventually calmed down a little bit, her breathing evening out. Just then, the door opened and Lieutenant Powell walked back into the room with a Styrofoam cup, followed by Detective Callahan and another man who Joyce didn't recognize. This new man was middle-aged; his hair was graying slightly and he looked rather tired. He was holding a clipboard in his hand and Joyce wondered privately if she was going to be questioned by this man.

"Joyce," said Lieutenant Powell, bending down next to Joyce. "Joyce, try to drink some of this."

Joyce took the Styrofoam cup and took a small swig of it. Powell had gotten her some tea, which Joyce found soothing given the events of the evening. Once the tea was swallowed, she turned to Powell.

"Listen, are you sure it's them?" she asked in a shaky voice. "I mean,

maybe I should look at the bodies and make sure..."

"No, they've already been identified," Powell replied. "I'm sorry, Joyce. There's no question it's them."

Joyce dissolved into fresh sobs. She started shaking slightly and closed her eyes so she wouldn't have to look at the others in the room while she cried. Joyce cried out Terry's name in grief while Powell awkwardly patted her on the arm, trying to be comforting.

"Joyce," Powell said weakly. He cleared his throat and tried again. "Joyce, this is Dr. Martin Brenner," he said, gesturing to the third man in the room.

"Hi, Joyce," Dr. Brenner said with a smile.

"Now, look, Joyce, I want you to tell Dr. Brenner everything that Hopper told you. If you can't remember anything, that's all right. Just try to remember as much as you can. Do you think you're up for that."

Joyce sniffed.

"Yeah, I guess so," she said, wiping her nose with the tissue she had been holding. She looked up at Dr. Brenner. "You're a doctor?" she asked.

"Criminal psychologist," Dr. Brenner replied, nodding and failing to stifle a yawn.

"Is Hopper crazy?"

"Well, that's what we're gonna find out," said Dr. Brenner, taking out a pen and clicking it and lifting his clipboard to start taking notes.

The Terminator reached the abandoned apartment where it had been hiding out in between tracking down the women named Joyce Byers. It climbed up the stairs and crawled into the apartment through the open window, preferring to not be seen with the injuries it had sustained during the car chase. The Terminator rose to its feet and walked through the pitch-black apartment before it reached a

drawstring and pulled it, turning on the overhead light.

The light in the room gave The Terminator its first look at the injuries it had sustained. There was blood along the side of its head from where it had slammed into the window when it crashed. And the left human eye of its outer shell appeared beyond repair. The Terminator quickly made a diagnostic and decided the more pressing matter was the injury to its arm. The Terminator's right arm had been difficult to move ever since the crash, so the Terminator sat down in the chair.

It reached for a small razor after rolling up its sleeve and looking at its arm. The Terminator used the razor to make an incision in its arm. It spent the next few moments cutting into the human skin that covered its metal exoskeleton. When the razor was filled with blood, The Terminator picked up a pair of scissors to keep cutting and open up the skin of the human arm.

When The Terminator was finished cutting its arm open, it started to move its fingers, one at a time. The Terminator tested the thumb and index finger before spotting the trouble with its middle finger moving. It peered down at the inside of its arm and saw one of the human veins that kept blood forming through its exoskeleton had jammed up with the wiring of its metal body.

The Terminator picked up the scissors once again and cut the vein, freeing it from the wiring. It then moved its middle finger again and found that it could easily move its finger again, which had successfully solved that problem.

Hopper sat with his hands handcuffed behind his back. He was in an interrogation room at the police department and he was growing more and more impatient by the second as he was questioned. The man, Dr. Brenner, had said he wanted to ask Hopper some questions about what he had done earlier in the evening and why. Dr. Brenner had claimed that the interview would be short, but it had dragged on for nearly half an hour now, and Hopper was growing weary of Dr. Brenner's questioning.

"So, you're a soldier," Dr. Brenner said after making a note on his

notebook. "Fighting for whom?"

Hopper took a deep breath to keep his emotions in check before answering.

"With the 132nd under Perry from 41 to 47," Hopper answered.

"That's the year 2047?" Hopper interrupted.

"That's right. And then Tech-Com fighting unit under the direct command of Jonathan and Will Byers for the last three years, until 50."

"Who was the enemy again?" Brenner asked, yawning once again.

"A computer defense system built by..."

Hopper's answer was interrupted by the pager Dr. Brenner had going off. Brenner sighed to himself and pressed the button to turn off the alarm.

"Sorry," he said quietly.

Hopper continued as if nothing had happened.

"Built for SAC-NORAD by Cyberdyne Systems," Hopper said.

"I see," Dr. Brenner said, stifling the cigarette he had been smoking and putting it out. "And this computer thinks it can win by killing the mother of its enemies. Killing them, in fact, before they're even conceived. Sort of a retroactive abortion?"

"Yes," Hopper said, nodding. "Skynet wanted to ensure its victory and its existence. That's why the Terminator was sent back: to ensure Skynet would be built and that the Byers brothers would not have a chance to defeat it."

"Tell me something, when you all arrived at the complex, as you say, why wouldn't the computer just kill the Byers brothers then, when they were right there?" Brenner said. "Why this elaborate scheme with the Terminator?"

"It had no choice," Hopper answered. "Their defense grid was smashed. We had won. Taking out the Byers brothers then would have made no difference to Skynet. So, Skynet had to wipe out their entire existence."

"Is that when you found the lab complex and discovered the... what was it?" Brenner said, reaching over and grabbing his notebook, glancing down at it. "The time displacement equipment?"

"That's right," Hopper said. "The Terminator had already gone through. Will Byers sent me to intercept and then they were supposed to blow the whole place."

"Well, how are you supposed to get back?" Dr. Brenner asked.

"I can't," Hopper said. "Nobody goes home. Nobody else comes through. It's just him and me."

The Terminator approached the bathroom sink and turned it on. It had managed to stop the bleeding from its head wound, but it still needed to clean the excess blood from its face. The Terminator washed the blood off before it dried off its head. The Terminator then noticed the damage to its left human eye up close.

The Terminator grabbed a clean razor from the bathroom sink and picked it up. It brought the razor up to its human eye and started to slice. It spent a few moments slicing in to the eye before it gripped the eye and ripped it from its socket. The Terminator dropped the eye into the sink, which was slightly filled with some water. The eye floated under the water like an egg in the water.

The Terminator reached for the towel again and started to clean out the now empty eye hole. It wiped away all of the blood before pulling the towel away and revealing the red eye of The Terminator's natural eye. The Terminator glanced at its reflection as if admiring its handiwork.

Just then the Terminator spotted a pair of sunglasses resting on the sink. The Terminator picked up the sunglasses and put them on. The sunglasses successfully covered the entire open eye wound and would

let the Terminator pass through areas with anything noticeably wrong with its appearance. The Terminator grinned slightly before it wiped down the human hair on its head to tame it.

The Terminator then returned to the living room and threw on the leather jacket it had stolen earlier that day. It then walked over to the bed near the open window and lifted the mattress, where the rest of its weapons were stored. The Terminator picked the assault rifle and the shotgun for its next move before it opened the window and climbed outside through it.

Joyce stood in the room where the investigation into the murders of women who shared her name was being held. She was joined by Powell, Callahan and Dr. Brenner and another officer, and they were all watching a video tape recording of Dr. Brenner's session with Hopper.

"It's just him and me," Hopper said on the tape.

There was a brief moment before Dr. Brenner questioned Hopper again.

"Why didn't you bring any weapons, something more advanced?" he asked. "Don't you have, uh...ray guns?"

"Ray guns?" asked Callahan, sounding amused.

Dr. Brenner grinned at Callahan and shrugged his shoulders before he focused his attention on the tape again.

"You go naked," Hopper answered. "Something about the field generated by a living organism. Nothing dead will go."

"Why?"

"I didn't build the fucking thing!" Hopper yelled irritably.

"Okay, okay," Brenner said, trying to defuse the tension. "But this cyborg, if it's metal..."

"Surrounded by living tissue!" Hopper interrupted.

"Oh, right, right."

At that, Brenner stood up and paused the tape and turned to face the others in the room.

"This is great stuff," he said jubilantly. "I could make a career out of this guy! You see how clever his part is? How it doesn't require a shred of proof? I mean, most paranoid delusions are intricate, but this is brilliant!"

Nobody responded, but that didn't deter Brenner's enthusiasm. He pressed play on the VCR again and sat back down.

"Why were the other two women killed?" Dr. Brenner asked on the tape.

"Most of the records were lost in the war," Hopper answered. "Skynet knew almost nothing about the Byers mother. Her full name, where she lived. They just knew the city and what year she would be most vulnerable. The Terminator was just being systematic."

"Uh-huh. Well, let's go back to what I was..."

"Look!" Hopper interrupted. "You have heard enough! I have answered your questions! Now I have to see Joyce Byers!"

"I'm afraid that's not up to me," Dr. Brenner said.

"Then why am I talking to you? Who is in authority here?"

"Please, I..."

"Shut up!" Hopper yelled. He then turned to look directly into the camera. "You still don't get it, do you? He'll find her! That's what he does! That's ALL he does! You can't stop him!"

At that, the officer who was in the room with Hopper and Brenner stood up and started to restrain Hopper, who was undeterred.

"He'll wade through you, reach down her throat and pull her fuckin' heart out!"

"Doc!" Powell said urgently.

"Oh!" Dr. Brenner said, standing up quickly and hurrying to the tape.

Brenner paused the tape before Hopper could say much more as he struggled with the officer on screen.

"Sorry," Dr. Brenner said sheepishly, glancing up at Joyce.

Joyce sighed before she spoke.

"So, Hopper is crazy?" she asked.

"In technical terminology, he's a loon," Dr. Brenner replied.

"Maybe," said Powell, standing up and leaving the room.

"Calvin!" Callahan exclaimed, standing up and rushing after his friend. Joyce looked at Brenner, who shrugged at her.

Callahan followed Powell outside, where Powell started pacing slowly, his mind clearly on to something.

"Powell, what are you doing?" Callahan asked.

"I'm thinking," Powell said, continuing to pace around.

"What's there to think about?" Callahan asked impatiently. "That Hopper guy is a fucking loon, you heard the Doc."

"I don't know," Powell said. "I just don't know, Phill. Why would he come up with that kind of story? What's the point?"

"Does it matter? Come on, Calvin. That was loon talk. The guy's a wacko, right?"

"He'd better be," Powell said quietly.

Callahan sighed.

"All right, look. How about I go and vet Hopper, try and see what I can find out about him. Will that make you feel better?"

"It wouldn't hurt," Powell said, nodding. "Anyway, we'd better get back inside and get a hold of the mother. God knows Joyce doesn't need anything else to worry about tonight."

A few minutes later, Powell called Joyce into his office. Powell was holding a bullet-proof vest up and showed it to Joyce when she walked into the office.

"Joyce, this is what they call body armor," he explained. "Our tac guys wear these. It can stop a 12-gauge round. This other individual must have been wearing one under his coat. Feel that. Go ahead."

Joyce felt the armor and had to admit that it certainly seemed tough and could have stopped the other man from getting shot. But there was something else to consider.

"What about when he punched through the windshield?" she asked.

"He was probably high on PCP," said Callahan. "Broke every bone in his hand and wouldn't feel it for hours. There was this guy once, you see this scar?" he said, holding up his hand and pointing to a mark on it.

Before Callahan could continue, Powell interrupted him, shoving the bulletproof vest into his hands.

"Thank you," Powell said as Callahan walked off, looking annoyed that he didn't get to finish his story.

"There's a couch in this other room," Powell said, gesturing to the next room. "Why don't you stretch out and get some sleep? It'll be at least an hour until your mother gets here."

"I can't sleep," Joyce replied.

"Try."

Joyce nodded and followed Powell into the next room and sat down on the couch.

"Well it may not look it, but that couch is very comfortable," Powell

said as Joyce lay down on it. Powell took off his suit jacket and placed it on Joyce for her to use as a blanket. "You'll be perfectly safe. We've got thirty cops in this building."

"Thank you," Joyce whispered before she closed her eyes. Powell smiled and stood up from the couch and walked back into his office to continue working.

Dr. Brenner knocked the glass near the front office of the police station. The desk sergeant took Powell's badge and put it back in its usual spot.

"Goodnight, Doc," the desk sergeant said.

"Goodnight," Dr. Brenner replied, yawning once again. He walked through the door and entered the foyer, headed for the front door. He paused when his beeper went off again, sighing in annoyance. Dr. Brenner turned off his beeper before he walked out the door.

As Dr. Brenner walked out, The Terminator walked into the police station, ignoring Brenner. The Terminator approached the desk sergeant, who had resumed working on filling out his nightly forms.

"I'm a friend of Joyce Byers," The Terminator said to the desk sergeant, who didn't look up from his work. "I was told she was here. Could I see her please?"

"No," said the desk sergeant, finally looking up. "You can't see her. She's making a statement."

"Where is she?" The Terminator asked.

"Look, it may take a while," he said. He used his pencil to gesture. "Want to wait? There's a bench over there."

The Terminator glanced over at the bench before he looked around the structural integrity of the room, calculating his next move. Once finished, The Terminator leaned forward and spoke to the desk sergeant.

"I'll be back," The Terminator.

The Terminator turned and left the lobby, returning to its car. Meanwhile, the desk sergeant resumed working on his forms, scratching away with his pencil. He was so focused that it wasn't until a split second before it happened that he noticed the headlights approaching the front door. The desk sergeant stood up, but it was too late and the car came crashing through the front doors and across the foyer, destroying it, and killing the desk sergeant.

Joyce woke back up with a start at the sound of the loud crashing noise. She could hear officers near her shouting, wanting to know what it was that had caused the noise. As Joyce sat up, she heard gunshots firing from a distance and she heard the officers yelling again. Joyce's heart rate sped up as she realized the police station was under attack and that Hopper had been telling the truth all along. She stood up from the couch and made to leave the office.

Before Joyce could leave, the door to the office opened and Powell hurried inside.

"Stay here," he instructed Joyce before he disappeared through another door, shutting it behind him.

Joyce sighed to herself as she resolved to stay in place until the gunfire stopped or Hopper had somehow escaped and found her.

The Terminator advanced slowly through the police station, shooting at all of the officers in its path. The officers didn't stand a chance against the barrage of bullets from the unstoppable Terminator. And none of their bullets had any effect on The Terminator, who barely flinched as it was shot at.

In one of the hallways, The Terminator stumbled on a power box and decided to make things more difficult for the officers and easier for him. The Terminator opened the power box and broke a pair of wires next to the power box before shoving the wires into the power box, which caused a blackout in the entire police station.

When the police station went dark, the glass bulb on the desk lamp

shattered in Powell's office, causing Joyce to shriek. She dived under the desk to hide as she heard the gunfire getting closer.

Meanwhile, Hopper looked up in the interrogation room he had been left in with a guard. He saw that the lights had gone out and he knew the Terminator had arrived to continue carrying out its mission. Hopper knew he had to act quickly and get to Joyce before The Terminator reached her.

The guard with Hopper glanced out the window before running to the door and opening it. Callahan was running by in the hallway and stopped briefly to instruct the guard to watch over Hopper. The guard nodded at Callahan and shut the door.

Before the guard could reach, Hopper shoved his full body weight into the guard, who stumbled against the door. Hopper then kned the guard in the stomach, knocking him out. The guard fell to the ground with a thud and Hopper leaned down to get the keys out of his pocket.

Powell and Callahan reached the back of the police station, where the officers' assault rifles were stored. Callahan grabbed Powell's rifle and tossed it to him, and Powell readied the rifle for attack. Callahan prepared his weapon as well as they heard the gunfire getting closer. Together, they hid in a room and waited on the shooter to arrive.

A few moments later, The Terminator came walking down the adjacent hallway, peering briefly into the room where Powell and Callahan were hiding. The Terminator didn't spot the two officers and instead kept going. Once The Terminator had gotten far enough away from their hiding spot, Powell jumped out of the room and fired at The Terminator.

The Terminator turned around and returned fire at Powell, striking him in the gut. Powell cried out in pain as he fell to the ground, dropping his assault rifle. He clutched the wound near his stomach as Callahan bent down to look at him.

"Calvin," Callahan said, trying to sound reassuring. Powell shook his

head.

Callahan stood up and turned to face the departing Terminator.

"Hey!" he shouted, firing several shots at The Terminator.

The Terminator slowly turned around, looking slightly annoyed that it was being slowed down, and returned fire. It fired several shots from its own assault rifle at Callahan before finishing him off with a blast from the shotgun.

Joyce shut her eyes at the sound of the latest shotgun blast. The gunfire sounded closer than ever and Joyce knew it was only a matter of time before she was found. She took a few deep breaths to calm herself down, even though she could barely control her shaking. After a few moments of quiet, Joyce decided to glance out from her hiding spot.

She looked around from under the desk and spotted a shadow approaching the office door, which Powell had locked before he took off again. Joyce gasped quietly and dived back behind the desk as the shadowy figure started to try and open the door. Since the door was locked, the figure had no luck. After a few moments of trying, Joyce heard glass breaking as the figure punched a hole in the glass and then unlocked the door.

Hopper walked into the office, squinting around for a sign of Joyce in the darkness. He walked over to a nearby door and opened it.

"Joyce!?" he shouted.

Joyce opened her eyes, recognizing Hopper's voice instantly.

"Hopper!" she shouted, getting up from her hiding place and rushing to her savior.

"Are you okay?" Hopper demanded.

"I think so," Joyce said.

"We gotta go, come on!"

Hopper grabbed Joyce's hand and led her out of the office and down the hallways. Several bodies of police officers were scattered along their path; many of them had tried to stop The Terminator, to no avail. It was also clear that some of the officers didn't even get to defend themselves; some of them weren't carrying their guns.

When they turned to go down a long hallway, Joyce and Hopper stopped when they heard a voice call out to them.

"Joyce! Hopper!" Powell shouted, grunting from the pain of his wound.

"Lieutenant!" Joyce screamed, diving to the ground and looking over Powell. "Don't worry, Lieutenant, we'll get you out of here."

Powell shook his head.

"There's no time," he said. He reached into his holster and pulled out his handgun, which he handed to Hopper.

"You protect her, Hopper, you hear me?" he said, his breathing getting raspy. "You two get out of here and get as far away from here as possible. Don't worry about me."

"What's the fastest way out of here?" Hopper asked.

Powell quickly explained the way out of the police station that would put them in the parking lot. The gunfire had stopped altogether and they knew it was only a matter of time before The Terminator would find them. The two of them thanked Powell before they took off, following his instructions.

Within moments, they reached the parking lot and they ran for a car. Hopper used his elbow to break the window and unlocked the door. Joyce got in first and took her spot in the passenger seat while Hopper hotwired the car.

Just as they were pulling away, the door they had exited through opened and The Terminator came walking out, spotting Joyce and Hopper in the car. The Terminator fired a few shots from its rifle at the car as Hopper sped away. None of the bullets hit the car and The Terminator quickly ran out of ammo. When The Terminator realized

it was all out of bullets, it leapt over the staircase and walked slowly over to its motorcycle, carefully planning out its next move.

Notes for the Chapter:

As promised, here is the next chapter, published the same day as the last one!

I hope getting two chapters makes up for the little break in between postings. I'm gonna try and update this story regularly, but I won't make any promises due to life sometimes getting in the way as it does.

In fact, I still have to write the final chapter of this story. I never got to it when NaNoWriMo happened and I still haven't done it yet; my plan is to write it during one of my weekends off from work and get it drafted and prepped for publishing while also publishing the next chapters in this story. Stay tuned for more!

5. In Hiding

Summary for the Chapter:

Joyce and Hopper drive as far away from the police station as they can, hoping to evade the Terminator for at least a little while.

Hopper drove the car for several hours, trying to put as many miles in between them and The Terminator as he could. He kept glancing in the rear-view mirror for a sign of The Terminator following them, and he was relieved to see an empty road behind them as he drove. Though it only delayed another confrontation between them and The Terminator, it did mean that they could both rest before they encountered The Terminator again.

They kept driving until about 3:30 in the morning. That's when the car started sputtering and Hopper glanced down at the odometer and saw that the car had run out of gas. Hopper kept the car going as long as it could. Just before the car died, a news bulletin came on the radio.

"This just in: Police in California are conducting the largest manhunt in the history of the state," said the radio reporter. "Authorities say one man was responsible for the deaths of numerous police officers at a police station in Los Angeles. It's not clear yet how many officers were killed, but early estimates point to at least a dozen officers being killed in the line of duty. Authorities are searching for two individuals for questioning about the shooting, though they are not wanted as suspects. A press conference is expected for later this morning to give out more information about the shooting. Stay tuned for more information."

As the radio report ended, the car finally gave out completely. Hopper waited until the car came to a stop before he shut off the engine and threw the car into neutral. He nodded at Joyce and the two of them got out of the car and went to the trunk after Hopper popped it from the front.

Hopper leaned down into the trunk and looked around for some

supplies to get them through the night.

"Take this," he said, handing Joyce a flashlight. Joyce took the flashlight just as Hopper pulled out a first aid kit and handed it to Joyce as well.

Hopper spent a few moments searching the car, but didn't find anything else useful. He stood up from the trunk and shut it.

"All right, let's get this hunk of junk off the road," he said.

Hopper and Joyce pushed on the back of the car and it slowly started rolling. Once they got it going at a steady pace, they pushed it toward the edge of the road, where it rolled into a ditch. Once satisfied that the car was disposed of, Hopper took the flashlight from Joyce and turned it on, gesturing for her to follow him.

Hopper led Joyce about a quarter of a mile away from where they had stopped, searching for somewhere they could stay for the night. He eventually found a small bridge and led Joyce to the enclosure below it. The bridge would provide cover from them being seen and keep the sun from shining directly on them when it rose.

When they had both settled under the bridge, Hopper and Joyce sat across from each other, both of them remaining silent. Joyce started shivering slightly to herself, which Hopper noticed.

"You cold?" he asked.

"Freezing," Joyce replied, her teeth chattering.

Hopper stood up and walked over to Joyce. He sat down next to her and opened up his jacket, which was large enough for Joyce to sit down next to him wrapped in it without being too much in Hopper's personal space.

"Thanks," Joyce muttered once she was under the coat. She stopped shivering and instead found herself flushing from being so close to Hopper.

Instead of commenting on it, Joyce decided to ask the question that had been burning in her mind all evening.

"Hopper, you got a first name?"

"It's Jim," Hopper replied.

"Jim, what's it like when you travel through time?"

"Pretty painful," Jim said. "There was a large, white light. I was spinning around constantly as the time displacement field was starting up around me. When I actually traveled, I just felt a lot of pain. It was like being born, I guess."

Just then, Joyce felt something warm and gooey on one of her hands. She held up her hand and realized that it was covered in blood.

"Oh my god!" she gasped.

Jim shrugged.

"Guess I got clipped when I was looking for you at the police station," he said.

Joyce looked up at him in shock.

"You mean you got shot?" she demanded.

"It's not bad," Jim replied.

"Well we need to get you to a doctor!"

"It's okay, forget it."

"What do you mean 'forget it' are you crazy?" Joyce exclaimed. Suddenly, she threw the jacket off her shoulders and crawled over to the first aid kit. "Take this off," she ordered Jim.

Jim obeyed her command, taking off the jacket and wincing slightly as it grazed his gunshot wound. Once the jacket was off, Joyce got a proper look at Jim's wound.

"Jesus," Joyce said.

"Looks like it just passed right through," Hopper observed.

"Ugh, this is gonna make me puke," Joyce said, grimacing as she picked out some supplies to treat the wound. "Would you just talk about something?"

"What?"

"I don't know. Anything. Just talk. Tell me about my sons."

"Well, they're both about my height," Hopper said just as Joyce started to wrap the wound. He winced in pain and looked over at Joyce and got his first proper look at her eyes. "They both have your eyes," he said.

"What are they like?" Joyce asked.

"They're both pretty similar in personality," Jim said. "They're kinda like you, actually. Jonathan is the more quiet of the two and he prefers combat over anything else. Will is always the one who's giving us inspiring speeches just before we go into battle. I gotta say, it was kinda weird hearing Jonathan give a speech right before we went after Skynet. But you definitely trust both of them, no matter what. They both have a certain strength about them. I would die for Jonathan and Will. And pretty much everyone who served with them would."

Joyce smiled to herself as she worked on cleaning up Jim's wound.

"At least I know for sure that the names I've always wanted for my children will work," she said. "Do you know who the father is? This way I won't tell him to buzz off."

"No, Jonathan and Will didn't talk about him much," Jim said. "I'm pretty sure he dies before the war..."

"Wait," Joyce said, holding up a hand. "I don't wanna know that part."

"All I know is you're probably gonna meet him soon if you haven't already," Jim said.

"Why's that?"

"Cause Jonathan was born in the year 2000," Jim replied. "He was 50

years old when I left them, and Will was just a few years younger. I think he was about 47 or so. I guess that means you're gonna meet the father soon and you'll be having kids in the next few years."

"God, it's weird to know that it's going to happen," Joyce said. "Was it Jonathan or Will who sent you back to protect me?"

Jim shook his head.

"I volunteered," he said.

"Why?" Joyce asked, shocked.

"It was a chance to meet the legend: Joyce Byers."

Joyce scoffed.

"I mean it," Jim said. "You're a legend amongst everyone in the resistance. Joyce Byers: the woman who taught her sons how to fight, to organize, who prepared them when they were kids, when you guys were all in hiding before the war."

Joyce sighed as she started wrapping Jim's wound.

"You're talking about things I haven't done yet in the past tense. It's driving me crazy," Joyce said before she tightened the dressing, causing Hopper to wince again.

There were a few moments of silence before Joyce spoke again.

"Listen, are you sure you have the right person?" Joyce asked, still not quite convinced she was the woman Hopper said she was.

"I'm sure," Hopper said.

"Oh, come on," Joyce said angrily. "Do I look like the mother of the future? I mean, am I tough? Organized? I can't even balance my checkbook!"

Joyce stood up and started pacing around. Hopper watched her with an amused expression before Joyce stopped and glared at him.

"Look, Hopper, I didn't ask for this honor and I don't *want* it! *Any* of it!"

"Your sons gave me a message to give to you," Jim said. "They made me memorize it: 'Thank you, Joyce, for your courage through the dark years. We can't help you with what you must soon face, except to say that the future is not set. There is no fate but what we make for ourselves. You must be stronger than you imagine you can be. You must survive, or we will not exist.' and that's all."

Hopper then looked at the dressing Joyce had done to his wound. He flexed his arm a few times and realized that she had done it as adequately as any of his fellow soldiers would have in the future.

"Good field dressing," he said, looking up at Joyce.

"You like it?" Joyce asked, grinning at Hopper. "It's my first."

There was a slight breeze of wind and Joyce shivered again. She sat back down next to Jim, who wrapped his jacket around Joyce.

"Won't you be cold?" she asked.

"Nah, cold doesn't really bother me all that much," Jim replied. "I grew up being cold all the time so I'm pretty much used to it. You should get some sleep, though. It'll be light soon."

Joyce rested her head on Jim's shoulder. She closed her eyes but found it difficult to fall asleep.

"Talk to me some more," she said.

"About what?" Jim asked.

"Tell me about where you're from. Or I guess when you're from," she said with a chuckle.

Hopper sighed before he started talking.

"All right," he said. "You have to stay out of sight during the daytime. It's safer at night to move around, but you've gotta watch out of the H-K's. They're out on patrol 24/7. But they're not too bright either."

It's just a matter of sneaking past them and making as little noise as possible..."

A few hours later, daylight started pouring in to the bridge where Jim and Joyce had sought refuge. Jim woke up at the first sign of light and was surprised to see Joyce still asleep, curled up in his embrace. If he wasn't mistaken, he had fallen asleep with his head resting on Joyce's own. He was slightly embarrassed by this, and hoped that Joyce wouldn't say anything when she woke up.

Jim glanced down at Joyce and saw that she was twitching slightly in her sleep. It was clear to Jim that she was dreaming. He stroked Joyce's cheek gently, which seemed to help wake her up. Joyce's eyes opened roughly and Jim removed his hand from her face, hoping that she hadn't felt his hand.

Joyce sat up in Jim's embrace, blinking the tiredness from her eyes.

"I was dreaming about what you were telling me about where you're from," she said. "And I could hear dogs barking in the background."

Jim nodded.

"We use them to spot Terminators," he said.

"Your world sounds pretty terrifying."

Jim nodded before Joyce wiggled her way out of his embrace and the two stood up, stretching out their bodies before leaving the bridge underpass. When they stepped out from under the bridge, they were met with dense fog surrounding them. They slowly made their way back to the main road and stood on the side of the road, waiting for someone driving by to pass them and pick them up.

The Terminator sat in its abandoned hotel room. Because of the injuries sustained while pursuing his targets, the flesh of The Terminator's human was starting to rot. Flies had planted themselves onto The Terminator's face, but The Terminator wasn't bothered by them. The Terminator also couldn't smell the rotting flesh, but it was

certainly noticed by other tenants in the apartment.

While The Terminator was flipping through Joyce's address book, a handful of knocks came pounding on the door. The Terminator ignored the knocks, instead focusing only on the address book in its hands.

The knocking on the door became more persistent, and after a few moments, the janitor who had stopped outside the apartment due to the smell finally spoke through the door.

"Hey buddy! You got a dead cat in there or what?"

The Terminator looked up from Joyce's address book. It turned its head toward the apartment door and a list of possible responses came up on its viewing screen.

Possible responses:

-Yes/No

-Or what?

-Go away

-Please come back later

-Fuck you, asshole

-Fuck you

The Terminator's internal computer selected the response.

"Fuck you, asshole," The Terminator said.

Outside the room, the janitor was taken aback by the rude response. But instead of fighting, he decided he had better things to do than get into an argument about a bad smell. The janitor then pushed his cart away from the apartment and down the hallway to his next

assignment.

Meanwhile, The Terminator turned its attention back to the address book. It flipped a page and stumbled upon an entry labeled "Moms' Cabin." The Terminator scanned the page, committing the information about Joyce's mother's cabin to its internal systems before The Terminator stood up, already calculating its next moves.

Within ten minutes, The Terminator had armed itself with its caliber of weapons, and put the sunglasses back on to hide its absent human eye. The Terminator left the apartment and walked down the hallway, carrying an assault rifle and holding it steady. A man who was walking down the hallway spotted The Terminator and quickly jumped out of its way, not daring to cross someone as heavily armed as The Terminator.

"Thanks!" Joyce said to the man driving the pickup who had given her and Jim a ride from the bridge underpass to the nearest motel.

Joyce and Jim hopped out of the truck, which drove off into the distance. Meanwhile, Joyce and Jim started to walk toward the Tiki Motel, where they would get a room at least for the night and be able to sleep on proper bedding. As they walked, Jim pulled out a rumpled wad of cash from his coat pocket.

"This enough?" he asked, holding up the cash to Joyce.

Joyce's eyes widened and she grabbed Jim's hands to lower them.

"Yeah, it's enough," she said. "I don't wanna know where you got it."

Joyce led Jim up to the manager's office of the motel. She approached the window and knocked on it.

"Be right with you," said the clerk.

Joyce nodded and looked at Jim, who was glancing around as if he were looking for a sign of The Terminator. Joyce was about to say something when the clerk got her attention.

"How can I help you?" he asked.

"We need a room for the night," Joyce said.

Jim bent down when he saw a dog approaching him and Joyce. The dog appeared to belong to the clerk, as it had a leash on and looked like it hadn't gone far. Jim was petting the dog when he looked up at Joyce.

"With a kitchen," he said.

"Do you have one with a kitchen?" Joyce asked.

"Yes ma'am, all of our rooms have kitchens," the clerk said.

"Great. We'll take whichever room you have available."

The clerk nodded and spent the next few moments entering in the information Joyce provided. She used Terri and Matt's names, hoping that news hadn't leaked out about their deaths. Luckily for Joyce since they paid cash, the clerk did not request a photo ID for their check-in. After a few moments, the clerk handed Joyce a set of keys and pointed out where the room was located. Joyce thanked the clerk before she turned and nodded at Jim, who patted the dog on the head one more time before following Joyce.

Joyce unlocked their motel room for the evening and walked inside. It wasn't a five-star motel room by any means, but it would be much more comfortable than sleeping under the stars for another night. Joyce plopped down on the bed, which was a little firm for her liking, while Jim looked around the rest of the motel room, checking out all of the amenities. The room had a kitchen, bathroom and small dining area for them to use in addition to two large beds and a small living area to relax in.

"I am dying for a shower," Joyce said, glancing at the bathroom and seeing the shower ready for her to use. "We should get your bandages looked at," she added to Jim.

"Later," Jim said, coming out of the kitchen and walking toward the bed where Joyce was sitting. "I'm gonna go out for some supplies. Will you be okay here?"

Joyce nodded and Jim turned to walk to the front door. Just before

reaching it, he hesitated, turning back around and pulling out Lieutenant Powell's gun from his coat pocket. He walked over to Joyce and set the gun next to her.

"Keep this," he said before turning around and walking out the front door.

Hopper glanced around for a store where he could buy supplies needed for their next inevitable confrontation with The Terminator. He spotted a hardware store across the street and headed to the nearest crosswalk, still glancing around for any sight of The Terminator.

About half an hour later, Joyce sat on the bed with a towel wrapped around her. She was on the phone with her mother, giving her an update on the events of the past two days, leaving out the more gruesome details and not breathing a word about The Terminator. Joyce told her mother that she needed to hide out in the cabin for a few days, but she remained elusive about why.

"No, I can't tell you where I am, Mom, I was told not to say," Joyce said, trying not to sound impatient with her mother.

"Oh, but honey, I need to know where I can reach you. You tell me to hide up here at the cabin like some fugitive and you won't tell me what's going on! I am worried sick here, dear!"

Joyce sighed to herself and leaned over to get the motel's contact information for her mother.

"Okay," Joyce said. "Okay, here's the number. Are you ready?"

"Yes, go ahead," said her mother.

"It's 408-555-1439," Joyce said. "Room 9. You got it?"

"I've got it."

"I've gotta go. I'm sorry I can't tell you more right now. I love you, Mom."

There was a brief pause before Joyce's mother responded.

"I love you, too, sweetheart," she said before abruptly hanging up the phone.

Joyce pulled the phone away from her ear in surprise as the dial tone started to buzz. Her mother wasn't known for just hanging up on her like that, but she thought her mother was probably just upset that she was being kept in the dark. Joyce couldn't blame her; she hadn't been forthright about everything, not even telling her mother the name of the motel. But she knew it was dangerous for her and anyone connected to her, so she only gave as much information as she could. Joyce sighed to herself as she hung up the phone and stood up from the bed to go dry off and put her clothes on.

Hopper returned a short time later, carrying a handful of large brown bags that were filled with supplies. He set the bags down on the kitchen table as Joyce joined him in the kitchen. Hopper ripped the bags open and the supplies spilled out onto the table.

"What have we got?" Joyce said, looking down at the supplies and starting to go through them. "Moth balls," she said, picking up a pack of moth balls. "Corn syrup....Ammonia," she said with amusement. "What's for dinner?"

"Plastique," Jim answered.

"Mmm, that sounds good," said Joyce with a grin. "What is it?"

"Nitroglycerin base," said Jim. "It's a bit more stable. I learned to make it when I was a kid."

The Terminator started dialing the phone number Joyce Byers had given him, amused at its own brilliance. Shortly before Joyce called, The Terminator had infiltrated Joyce's mother and terminated her, having impersonated Joyce's voice to gain her mother's confidence.

Within moments, someone answered the phone.

"Tiki Motel," said the voice on the other end.

"Give me your address there," The Terminator commanded in its regular human voice.

The Terminator took down the address of the Tiki Motel and proceeded to leave the cabin, grabbing its weapons and heading outdoors. Once The Terminator was situated on its motorcycle, it calculated the time it would take to travel to the motel where its targets were located. The Terminator's computer estimated it would take about three hours to reach the motel. The Terminator then figured out the quickest route to the motel and took off on its motorcycle.

A short time later, Jim was showing Joyce how to build pipe bombs with the materials he had purchased. Joyce was wiping down the first pipe bomb she was making.

"Make sure there's none on the threads," said Jim, taking the pipe bomb from Joyce and demonstrating. "Like this."

Joyce imitated Jim, who nodded at her.

"Screw the end cap on," Jim said.

Joyce started to do so but stopped when Hopper flinched.

"Very gently!" he said urgently.

Joyce loosened her grip slightly as she was more careful about screwing on the end cap. She grinned at Hopper.

"You must have had a fun childhood," she said.

Once Joyce had finished putting the end cap on, Jim took the pipe bomb from her and tightened the end cap.

"That's good," he said. "All right, six more like that and I'll get started on the fuses."

Jim and Joyce finished making the pipe bombs about an hour and a half later. When they were finished, Joyce lay down on the bed while Jim sat on a stool next to the recliner, staring out the window, shirtless. Jim had started to sweat while making the fuses and had taken off his shirt to cool off. It had taken everything in Joyce for her to not say anything about the scars and other marks she saw on Jim's back when he was shirtless. It had truly shocked her.

"He'll find us, won't he?" Joyce asked.

There was a beat before Jim responded.

"Probably," he said.

Joyce rolled over on the bed before she sat up and stepped over to the recliner and sat down in it.

"It'll never be over, will it?"

Jim didn't answer, instead staring absently out the window while Joyce was left to her thoughts. After a few moments, Joyce couldn't handle the silence.

"Look at me, I'm shaking," she said, noticing how much she was unable to sit still with everything on her mind. Jim turned around and looked at her and Joyce saw that Jim looked a little sad, though she couldn't explain why. "Some legend, huh? You must be pretty disappointed."

"No," Jim said, shaking his head. "I'm not."

Joyce couldn't think of a response to that, and she and Jim simply looked at each other for several seconds before Joyce thought of something to say.

"Jim, the women in your time: what are they like?" she asked.

"Good fighters."

"That's not what I meant," said Joyce. "Was there someone special?"

"Someone?"

"A girl. You know."

"No," Jim said quickly. He looked away from Joyce. "Never."

"Never?"

Jim didn't respond and he didn't turn back around to look at Joyce.

"I'm sorry," Joyce said, putting a hand on Jim's shoulder. "I'm so sorry." She traced a line down Jim's back, passing by the scars and marks on it. "So much pain."

"Pain can be controlled," Jim said. "You just disconnect it."

"So you feel nothing?"

Jim hesitated, looking like he was thinking hard about what to say next. It looked as if he were about to admit his biggest secret to Joyce. Joyce couldn't explain how she knew this, but she knew whatever she was about to hear was important.

"Will gave me a picture of you once," he said. "I didn't know why at the time. It was very old. Torn. Faded. You were young like you are now. You seemed just a little sad. I used to always wonder what you were thinking at that moment. I memorized every line. Every curve."

Jim then looked deep into Joyce's eyes and somehow Joyce knew what he was about to say just before he said it.

"I came across time for you, Joyce," Jim said. "I love you. I always have."

Jim sighed as he turned away from Joyce before he stood up. He walked over to the kitchen table, where the pipe bombs were sitting. Jim roughly picked up a small bag and started shoving the pipe bombs into it. Joyce stood up from the recliner and walked over to Jim, desperate to say something, but not being able to find the words.

"I shouldn't have said that," Jim said.

Jim kept shoving pipe bombs into the bag. Joyce still couldn't find

the words to say. Instead, she gently grabbed Jim's face, and Jim immediately stopped moving, turning his attention to Joyce. Joyce leaned forward and started to kiss Jim, who was taken aback. Joyce stopped kissing him and the two stared at each other for a few seconds before they both leaned in and started kissing each other passionately. Joyce wrapped her arms around Jim as they both stumbled into the refrigerator, kissing each other hard, and holding onto each other like lifelines.

They soon stopped kissing each other and both looked over at the bed. Jim grabbed Joyce's hand and laced their fingers together before they both rushed over to the bed, falling onto it and giggling madly before kissing each other again.

Notes for the Chapter:

And then sexy time happens, but since I don't write smut, it'll just be implied in this story, lmao!

Hope you all enjoyed this chapter; the final showdown of part one is coming soon! And I still need to write the final showdown of the whole story; I'm thinking I may do it this weekend when I'm at home keeping out of the cold Texas is experiencing right now. Stay tuned for more soon!

6. Final Fight

Summary for the Chapter:

The Terminator descends on its targets, who must use the weapons they have to defeat it once and for all.

After making love with Jim, Joyce couldn't help but feel a little giddy. They had been perfect together, and Joyce knew that the love she felt for Jim was real. It was almost unbelievable to her that Jim had been a complete stranger until two days ago. But she now felt as if she had known Jim all of her life, and she knew she wanted to spend the rest of her life with him. And she knew being with Jim was a matter of life or death, as he was the only man who knew how to fight The Terminator.

Joyce thought of all this as she finished tying her shoes. When she was done, she picked up the bag of pipe bombs and walked over to Jim, who had just finished putting on his jacket.

"Think fast!" Joyce said, pretending she was going to throw the bag.

Jim flinched before he realized Joyce was just messing around. The two of them started laughing at each other, both of them feeling giddy.

Suddenly, they heard the motel manager's dog barking outside. The smiles vanished from both of their faces as they glanced toward the front door and then looked at each other. They both knew the same thing: The Terminator had found them.

The Terminator slowly made its way toward room nine of the Tiki Motel. Its internal computer was calculating its next move and showed a high probability that it would catch its targets off guard, which would lead to a successful mission. The Terminator passed by a man, who backed against his truck when he saw The Terminator raise its assault rifle, turning off the safety.

The Terminator reached the front door and kicked it open. It immediately started firing into the room. The bullets hit the bed and would have been fatal had someone been in the bed. The Terminator glanced around for a sign of its targets and realized the apartment was empty.

Outside, The Terminator heard the truck engine starting up and glanced at the window, seeing its targets getting into the truck. The Terminator headed outside and walked toward the truck, raising its gun. Before it could get off a shot, the truck crashed into The Terminator, sending it falling to the ground. The truck then took off, speeding away quickly. The Terminator got back to its feet, picked up the assault rifle and ran back to its motorcycle, ignoring the dog that was barking at it.

Jim sped away from the motel as quickly as he could without drawing police attention. When they were about a mile from the motel, Jim glanced in the rearview mirror and saw a motorcycle approaching them at a high rate of speed. Jim knew it was The Terminator and he sped up slightly, trying to outrun The Terminator. But The Terminator kept pace with Jim, who was growing frustrated.

Suddenly, Joyce lifted up the bag of pipe bombs and held it up to Jim, who nodded at her.

"Trade places!" he shouted.

As carefully as they could in a high speed moving truck, Jim and Joyce traded places. Jim slid over to the passenger side of the truck while Joyce took over driving. When they were both in place, Jim pointed to the approaching tunnel.

"Go down there!" he instructed Joyce.

Joyce nodded and turned into the tunnel. The Terminator followed them closely, but remained far enough away from the truck. Jim pulled out a pipe bomb and lit the fuse before he tossed it at The Terminator. His aim was a little short as the bomb exploded just after The Terminator drove past it. The Terminator fired a few shots from its rifle at Jim, but none of the bullets hit him. Jim was not deterred.

He lit and threw three more bombs at The Terminator, who managed to avoid being caught in any of the explosions.

Frustrated, Jim threw the bag of bombs to the floor of the truck and pulled Lieutenant Powell's gun from his pocket just as they were exiting the tunnel. Jim was just about to aim at the tires on The Terminator's motorcycle to try and flatten one when Joyce yelled at him.

"Jim, wait!" she said.

Jim looked at Joyce, who was looking determinedly into the mirror on the driver's side of the car. Joyce timed it just right so The Terminator would be caught between the guardrail and the truck. Joyce then turned the steering wheel roughly to the left, smashing The Terminator and its motorcycle into the guardrail. She kept the wheel toward the left before she saw The Terminator fly off the motorcycle and to the ground.

Joyce then quickly corrected her steering and kept driving. Unfortunately, a piece of debris from the damaged motorcycle had rolled under the truck and pierced the passenger side front tire. The tire went flat immediately and Joyce lost control of the truck, which went rolling over onto its side before ending up upside down, knocking Jim unconscious as he hit his head on the roof of the truck.

The Terminator sat up from its fall, glancing around for a sign of its targets. When it turned around, it spotted the overturned truck and started to calculate its next move when a semi truck suddenly appeared and smacked into it. The Terminator held on to the bottom of the semi truck as the semi's breaks were being slammed on and it was coming to an uncomfortable stop.

Joyce sat up in the truck, rubbing her head from hitting her head on the roof. She hadn't lost consciousness, but her head was certainly aching. She glanced over at the semi truck and saw the driver get out and look underneath the truck. Just then, The Terminator appeared out of nowhere and attacked the driver. Joyce closed her eyes and kept them squeezed shut. When she opened her eyes again, the driver was on the ground, motionless, and The Terminator was limping to the driver's side of the semi.

Joyce shook Jim into consciousness. Jim groaned in pain and rubbed his head as he opened his eyes.

"What happened?" he asked in a weak voice.

"We gotta go," Joyce replied, ignoring Jim's question. "He's still coming after us."

Jim looked up and saw the semi truck turning around to head toward them. Jim grabbed the bag of pipe bombs as the two of them crawled out of the truck. They had just gotten to their feet and started running away from the truck as The Terminator drove the semi truck into their truck. The Terminator slammed on its breaks and turned the truck around to chase after Jim and Joyce.

Jim and Joyce were lucky that the streets were mostly empty this late at night. They were running in the middle of the street trying to evade The Terminator. Unfortunately, they were barely outrunning the semi truck. When they reached another street, they turned and ran down it, hoping to slow down The Terminator in the semi. They managed to gain a little ground, but as they ran past a trash dumpster, Jim tripped on the sidewalk and fell to the ground.

"Don't stop, run!" Jim shouted at Joyce, who nodded as she kept running.

The Terminator didn't seem to care about Jim being more vulnerable, instead focusing all of its attention on Joyce. The Terminator chased after her in the semi as Joyce ran onto the sidewalk, hoping that would slow The Terminator down. Instead, The Terminator turned the truck onto the sidewalk and continued chasing Joyce.

Meanwhile, Jim bent down into the bag of pipe bombs and pulled one out. He lit the fuse and threw the pipe bomb into the exhaust pipe of the semi. Jim then opened up the lid to the dumpster and jumped inside it, closing the lid to stay in cover.

Joyce kept running down the sidewalk and soon turned back into the street to try and gain a little distance from The Terminator. The only thing on her mind was running and getting as far as possible from the semi truck. She noticed a building coming into her sight and started

running toward it.

Joyce had just reached the side of the building when the semi truck suddenly exploded. The explosion came from the back of the truck, where Jim had thrown in the pipe bomb and the entire truck was soon overtaken by the explosion. Flames were flying everywhere and the semi came to a stop. Joyce was nearly thrown from her feet from the explosion and she jumped down to the ground and covered her head to avoid being hit by any debris.

In a few moments, the explosion stopped and all that remained were the flames from the resulting fire. Joyce looked up from the ground and she saw The Terminator jump out of the driver's seat. Joyce froze and held her breath. Although The Terminator was on fire like the rest of the semi truck, it was still moving. The Terminator took a few steps before it collapsed to the ground, not moving and flames overtaking it completely.

Joyce let out a sigh of relief as she stood up. She walked slowly over to the flaming semi truck and simply stared at all the wreckage. A few moments later, she heard footsteps approaching and she froze again. She glanced over at The Terminator's body and saw that it was still on the ground, not moving. And that could only mean one thing.

"Joyce!" Jim cried out.

Joyce looked up and saw Jim approaching her, holding his side as if in pain, but looking relatively unharmed.

"Jim!" Joyce said breathlessly as she ran up to Jim. When they reached each other, they threw their arms around one another and fell to their knees. Joyce was sobbing uncontrollably, feeling all sorts of emotions after everything that had happened.

"We did it, Jim!" she said. "We got it!"

"Yeah," Jim replied, holding on to Joyce as if she were his personal lifeline.

The two of them held each other in silence for a few moments until Jim sensed some movement to his left. Jim looked over and saw the

silver skeleton of The Terminator rising in the flames. The human skin had all burned off from The Terminator and it now looked exactly like the hundreds of Terminators Jim had faced in the future.

Jim slowly started to stand up, breaking the hug with Joyce. Joyce looked up at Jim in confusion and saw him staring to his left. Joyce looked over and saw The Terminator pushing aside debris to make room for it to advance on them.

"No!" Joyce screamed as she and Jim both got to their feet.

Before running off, Jim bent down and picked up the bag of pipe bombs, grabbing the last one. They ran toward the building near where the semi had exploded as The Terminator was slowly making its way after them. One of the legs of The Terminator was damaged, causing it to limp along as it gave chase, so it wasn't as fast as it could be.

When they reached the front door of the nearby building, Joyce found the front door was locked. She glanced at the ground and saw a piece of wood lying on the ground. She picked it up and rammed it into the glass of the front door, shattering the window. When the glass was all broken, Joyce leaned forward and unlocked the door.

Once inside, Jim and Joyce ran down the first hallway. They tried to open the doors along the hallway, but all of them were locked. As they continued running down the hallway, Joyce glanced behind and saw The Terminator following them, limping along down the hallway, but seeming determined to continue after them. When they reached the end of the hall, they found a door that opened. Jim opened the door and pulled Joyce inside the next room just as The Terminator was approaching them.

Before The Terminator could reach them, Jim slammed the door shut and locked it. The Terminator came flying into the door with its body, banging against the door and trying to get in. Jim and Joyce stepped away from the door and looked around in the new room they were in.

It appeared that they were in some sort of computer factory. There were a bunch of large machines in the room that looked as if they

were designed for building other machines and computers. Jim hurried over to a nearby switchboard and started pressing buttons, which turned on the various machines in the large room they were in.

"What are you doing?" asked Joyce.

"Cover," Jim replied. "So it can't track us."

Jim kept pressing buttons, turning on more and more machines as the bangs from the door grew more insistent. Joyce saw the metal on the door starting to crumble and she knew there were just a few moments before The Terminator would succeed in breaking through the door and entering the room.

"Jim, come on! It's almost through!"

Jim nodded, pressing a final set of buttons and grabbing Joyce's hand. The two of them took off deeper into the room, looking around for somewhere to hide. Meanwhile, The Terminator finally broke a large hole in the door and reached inside, removing the lock Jim had used and opening the door.

The Terminator slowly entered the room, scanning around for a sign of its targets. Suddenly, several of the machines surrounding The Terminator seemed to sense it and were scanning The Terminator. The Terminator glanced around at the other machines, diagnosing exactly what they all were and computing ways of distracting the machines.

From his and Joyce's hiding spot, Jim found a metal bar, which he picked up and held on to as he continued following Joyce through the factory. When they rounded the next corner, Joyce grabbed on to the wall and accidentally pressed a button, which caused a hydraulic lift nearby to drop, causing a large ruckus that echoed throughout the room.

Joyce glanced at Jim, who nodded at her, and the two kept moving, this time much faster than they had. They made their way deeper into the factory and approached a dead end. They turned back around and made to go back the way they came when they stopped

and found themselves face-to-face with The Terminator.

Since the human skin of The Terminator had burned off, The Terminator could no longer speak. If it could, it might have told Jim and Joyce that they had reached the end of the line and there was no escape for them. Instead, The Terminator just slowly walked toward them, glaring at them with its red eyes and calculating how it was going to carry out its mission.

Jim and Joyce started backing up and found themselves on some stairs. They walked backward up the stairs, Jim pushing Joyce behind him as The Terminator came walking up the stairs with them. When they reached the top of the stairs, Jim and Joyce stopped moving as The Terminator struggled up the stairs due to its damaged leg.

"Joyce, you've gotta run," Jim muttered under his breath.

"No," said Joyce weakly.

"Joyce..."

"No!" Joyce shouted.

"Run!" Jim yelled back as The Terminator reached the top of the stairs. Joyce took a few steps away from Jim before glancing back at him.

"Run!" Jim shouted again before he turned around to face The Terminator, which was just a few feet away from him.

"Come on, motherfucker," Jim muttered just as The Terminator lifted its arm to attack Jim.

Before The Terminator could land a blow, Jim swung the metal pole he had picked up and hit The Terminator in the head. Jim got in several hits, nearly decapitating The Terminator. But The Terminator straightened its head and roughly grabbed the metal pipe as Jim made to swing at him again. It yanked the pole out of Jim's hands and threw it aside. The Terminator then punched Jim, sending him tumbling to the ground.

Jim pulled the final pipe bomb from his coat pocket and started to light it. From her hiding spot, Joyce ducked into cover when she saw Jim lighting the fuse. When the fuse was lit, Jim shoved the pipe bomb into The Terminator's abdomen before rolling away and falling down the stairs.

The Terminator had about half a second to realize the pipe bomb was in its abdomen and reached down to grab it before the pipe bomb exploded. The Terminator's body ripped into several pieces, with both of its legs flying in separate directions and its left arm flying off its body as well. The head, torso and right arm of The Terminator went flying in another direction and The Terminator landed near Jim, who had fallen unconscious from the fall.

When the debris finished flying, Joyce looked up from the cover she had taken. She slowly stood up, relieved that none of the debris from The Terminator's body had landed near her and caused damage. Joyce slowly walked over to Jim to check on him and make sure he was all right. Just before reaching Jim, she found the metal pipe on the ground. She picked it up and walked over to The Terminator's head and torso.

Although The Terminator wasn't moving, Joyce wouldn't be satisfied until she saw the lights go out in its eyes. She lifted the metal bar overhead and aimed for The Terminator's neck.

"You're terminated, fucker," she said as she brought down the metal pole into The Terminator's neck.

As expected, The Terminator seemed to wake up and was struggling against the pole in its neck. Joyce used all of her strength to twist and turn the metal pole, causing The Terminator's head to come loose. She kicked away The Terminator's arm, which had started reaching for her before she pulled back hard on the metal pole. The Terminator's head came flying off from its torso and Joyce dropped the metal pole, breathing heavily. Joyce glanced over at The Terminator's head. The eyes of The Terminator slowly faded before going completely blank. It was dead.

Joyce walked over to Jim and collapsed to her knees. She reached over to Jim and saw that he was still breathing and his breathing

sounded normal. She checked his pulse and found that it was still strong. Joyce smiled to herself as she slowly fell to the ground, falling unconscious as well.

Joyce was woken up some time later. It could have minutes or it could have been hours, but she didn't know. All she knew was she was on a stretcher, which was being lifted from the ground.

"She's awake," said a voice next to her.

"You're gonna be all right now, miss," said another voice, sounding gentle. "We're gonna get you and this man out of here and to the hospital in just a minute."

Joyce turned her head and saw Jim being loaded onto a stretcher as well. She started crying softly to herself, feeling relief that everything was over, at least for now. Joyce leaned back onto the stretcher, resting, as it was pushed out of the building and loaded into a stretcher. She waited until she saw Jim loaded into the ambulance as well before she turned again. Jim had turned to look at her and he was smiling as well. There was blood on Jim's head from where The Terminator had punched him, but he appeared relatively unharmed otherwise. Joyce reached over and grabbed onto Jim's hand.

"We made it," she said, fresh tears falling down her eyes. "We made it, Jim."

"Yeah, we did, Joyce. We sure did."

Notes for the Chapter:

Hello, all!

Well, as luck would have it, Snovid 2021 happened in Texas, meaning my updating this story was delayed. I had power on and off (mostly on, thank goodness) during that week from hell and I lost water pressure for about two days. But everything is finally back to normal.

And, good news: this morning I FINALLY outlined the final chapter of this story! I've only been putting

it off for three months now (lmao). I'm gonna start writing the final chapter tonight and I'll likely finish it tomorrow! Once the final chapter is written, I plan to update this story more regularly with the rest of the chapters, as I'd like to have it finished by my birthday on March 18th. Stay tuned for more soon!

7. Six Months Later: November 1999

Summary for the Chapter:

Six months after the events involving The Terminator, Joyce Byers is uprooting her entire life to live with Jim Hopper and prepare for the future that she knows will come.

Joyce drove down the empty stretch of road. She was driving her Jeep through a desert, heading as far south as she could from her hometown of Los Angeles. Jim had found a place for them to live down south and she had packed up everything she had to join Jim and prepare for whatever lay ahead.

In the six months since the defeat of The Terminator, both Jim and Joyce had quickly recovered from their injuries sustained in the computer factory. They learned that the factory they were in was owned by Cyberdyne Systems, the company that would later be responsible for the creation of Skynet. They had learned this when they were interrogated by police officers who had arrived at the hospital.

Luckily for them, Lieutenant Powell had somehow managed to stay alive long enough to tell responding officers not to arrest Jim or Joyce after fleeing the police department. They weren't sure how Powell had been able to pull this off with his dying breath, but they were eternally grateful to the man who had made sure they wouldn't be incarcerated.

Jim and Joyce were also lucky they weren't in jail for another reason. About a month after defeating The Terminator, Joyce found herself feeling sickly. After a few days of fighting what she thought was a stomach flu, Joyce saw a doctor and learned that she was pregnant. Even before the doctor had told them, Joyce knew she was pregnant with a boy and that his name would be Jonathan Byers.

"Did you know?" Joyce had asked when they left the doctor's office.

"I had some idea," Jim replied. "It took me a while to figure out, and

Jonathan and Will always avoided the topic whenever it was brought up, but right before I was sent back, I think I knew."

"Does this change anything?"

"Never," replied Jim. "I will stay with you until the end of time if I have to, Joyce. Your safety and the safety of our sons is my biggest priority."

Joyce hadn't thought it possible to fall in love with Jim any more, but he proved her wrong not only that day, but every day. Between his constant worrying about Joyce and her pregnancy, and his waiting hand and feet on her, Joyce knew she would be safe with Jim, and that he would do whatever it took to keep her safe and, eventually, keep their sons safe.

Jim and Joyce got married soon after that. They hadn't had a big ceremony; with Joyce's mother and Terry both gone, there was nobody to attend the wedding since none of Jim's family was around. They went to the courthouse and were denied a marriage license due to Jim not being able to provide a social security number. Instead, they went to a Justice of the Peace, who hadn't questioned their identities, and were married by her instead.

Now, just five months later, Jim and Joyce were relocating to the south in order to prepare for the future and for the arrival of Jonathan, who would be born in about three months.

As she drove down the road, Joyce was recording a tape that she would save for Jonathan and Will to listen to when they were older in case anything ever happened to her. She hadn't known why she was doing it at the time, instead only knowing that it was the right thing to do and she needed to do it.

"Tape seven, November 10th, where was I?" Joyce mused as she started to record her latest tape. "What's most difficult for me is deciding what to tell you and what not to. But I guess I have a while yet until you're even old enough to understand these tapes. They're more for me at this point just so I can keep it straight."

Joyce stopped recording when she glanced down at her dashboard

and saw that she was running low on gas. Luckily for her there was a gas station about a half mile away from her. She picked up the pistol that was resting in her lap and put it away in her armrest cubby and closed it.

She pulled into the gas station parking lot and parked her Jeep next to one of the gas pumps. Joyce awkwardly got out of the car, holding her stomach as she did. Being pregnant was something that had taken quite a bit of getting used to, though she was more comfortable with it now that she was about two-thirds of the way through her first pregnancy.

Joyce spotted a gas station attendant approaching her and she nodded at him. She picked up her Spanish translation book and opened it before she spoke to the attendant.

"Gasolina, por favor?" Joyce asked, reading from her book. The attendant nodded at her.

"Cuanta?" the attendant asked.

Joyce looked back at her book.

"Llenar el tanque?" said Joyce, hoping that she wasn't butchering the Spanish language.

"Ah, fill it up, si!" said the attendant, tapping his hat at Joyce and walking around to the other side of the Jeep to fill it up with gas.

Joyce went inside to get a drink and snack while the attendant filled up her car. She paid for her goods, including the gas, before she walked back out and got into the car. Joyce took a swig from the water she had bought before she got back into the Jeep and sat down. The attendant had already finished filling up the Jeep, but Joyce wasn't quite ready to continue on her journey just yet.

Instead, Joyce picked up the tape recorder again and set it on top of the console. She held the microphone up to her face and pressed record.

"Should I tell you boys about your father?" she asked. "Boy that's a tough one. I mean, you boys are going to know him in your early life,

but you won't know just how important he will be later in your lives. If I tell you boys about him, will it affect your decision to send him here, knowing that he is your father?" Joyce considered what she was telling her sons before she continued on. "If you don't send Jim, you boys can never be. God, a person can go crazy thinking about all this."

Joyce paused again, the thought of Jim making her long for his touch and his calming voice. She knew she was just hours away from seeing him again, but being without him after being with him almost all the time was almost unbearable. She grinned at the fact that her life had become a cliché.

"I suppose I will tell you," she said into the tape recorder. "I owe him that and you boys need to know the truth. Maybe it'll be enough that, in the time we've had together, we've loved a lifetime's worth."

Joyce had just finished pressing the record button again to stop the recording when she was distracted by a large flash. She blinked before she realized that the flash had come from a camera. Joyce looked to her left and saw a young boy, about 8 years old, standing next to her and lowering a camera.

The boy started speaking to Joyce in Spanish, but he was speaking so fast that Joyce didn't have time to translate his words with her translator book. Luckily for Joyce, the gas station attendant walked back over and was watching the boy speak to Joyce with an amused expression on his face.

"What did he just say?" Joyce asked the attendant.

"He said that you're very beautiful, senora, and he is ashamed to ask you for five American dollars," said the attendant. "But if he doesn't, his father will beat him."

Joyce smirked at the kid.

"Pretty good hustle, kid," she said before holding up four fingers. "Cuatro."

"Si, si," the boy said, nodding. Joyce handed him four \$1 bills and the

boy took them eagerly. The boy gave Joyce the photo he had taken. "Gracias."

Joyce took the photo from the boy and looked at it. Suddenly, she was hit with a sense of irony as she realized this was the photo that one of her sons had given to Jim in the future. She smiled to herself and she set the photo down in the console just as the boy was speaking again and pointing to the sky. Joyce looked up and saw approaching storm clouds.

"What did he just say?" Joyce asked the gas station attendant.

"He said there's a storm coming in," the attendant replied.

Joyce sighed. "I know," she said, putting her sunglasses back on and turning on her Jeep. She nodded at the attendant, who tipped his hat at her again before she put the Jeep into drive and started driving away. She turned out into the main road again, driving toward the storm clouds and the storm of the future that would affect not only her life but the lives of her husband and her sons.

Notes for the Chapter:

What's this? Me posting two chapters in two days?
It's more likely than you think.

Well, I have some great news, everyone! Earlier today I FINALLY finished writing this story! I've had all but the last chapter written since November, but I just couldn't get inspired to plan and write that final chapter. But now I've finally done it. And with the final chapter written, I will be publishing this story more consistently. Starting today, I will be updating this story every Monday, Wednesday and Friday leading up to March 17th, when I will publish the final chapter and you will be able to read this story in its entirety. Stay tuned for more soon on Wednesday!

8. Los Angeles, 2050

Summary for the Chapter:

One week after the defeat of Skynet, Dustin and Steve discover evidence of a second time displacement field that has been used by Skynet. Once again, Jonathan and Will must send someone back to protect their younger selves. This time, they won't be sending back a human.

Mike woke with a start when he heard the sound of pounding on his and Will's front door. He sat up in bed and glanced over to his left, where Will was still sound asleep. Mike breathed a sigh of relief that Will hadn't woken up. Ever since they had sent Jim through the time displacement field and then blown the place, Will had been having trouble sleeping. Mike wasn't sure if it was a combination of fear over The Terminator succeeding in its mission or Jim not being able to come back, but whatever it was, Will had a lot on his mind during the past week.

Mike stood up from the bed, grabbing a robe and giving Will a quick kiss on the forehead before he left the bedroom and headed to the front door. Whoever wanted to come inside sounded like they were desperate, given the knocking. Before answering the door, Mike grabbed his plasma gun and held onto it as he put his hand on the door knob.

"Who is it?" Mike demanded.

"It's Dustin and Steve," came Dustin's voice.

"Prove that," Mike said.

"Dustin Wheeler, lieutenant in the Resistance, which defeated Skynet one week ago," Dustin recited like he had memorized the script Mike told him to identify himself with. "We sent Jim Hopper to May 12, 1984 to intercept a Terminator that had been sent back through time to kill Joyce Byers and prevent the births of Jonathan and Will Byers, the leaders of the Human Resistance."

"All right, all right, you can shut up now, Dustin," Mike said, opening the door.

Mike frowned when he saw the expressions on Dustin and Steve's faces. Both of them looked grim.

"What is it?" Mike asked.

"Is he here, Mike?" Dustin asked.

"Of course he is," Mike replied. "He's asleep, though, Dustin."

"Can you go wake him up, Wheeler?" Steve asked, sounding impatient. "It's kinda important."

Mike glared at Steve for a moment before he turned to Dustin, who nodded at him.

"It's really important, Mike, he needs to hear it."

Mike sighed.

"All right, I'll go wake him up, but if you guys are fucking around, I swear to god I'll strangle you."

"Please do and then you and I can go back to sleep," came an amused voice behind Mike.

Mike whipped around and saw Will walking up to the front door, rubbing his eyes and yawning.

"Will!" Mike said. "I thought you were sleeping."

"Hard to sleep with all that chattering you guys are doing," Will said, still looking amused. He gave Mike a kiss on the cheek. "I assume this is important, guys, since you deemed it necessary to wake us up in the middle of the night."

"We found something, Will," Dustin said seriously.

Immediately, the amused expression on Will's face vanished and he suddenly looked all-business.

"What have we got?" he asked.

Dustin and Steve looked at each other, hesitating, before Steve answered.

"We found another time displacement field," Steve said.

Mike gasped and Will closed his eyes.

"Son of a bitch," Will muttered under his breath. "I should've known those machines would try something like this. Have you guys told Jonathan yet?"

Dustin nodded.

"He said to come and get you while he rallies the rest of the leaders," he said.

"Okay. Give us a sec to get ready and we'll join with the others. Are they meeting at Jonathan and Nancy's?" Steve nodded. "We'll meet you there. You two: go and get our friend. It can't hurt to have him along with us. Maybe he'll be able to tell us what we're dealing with."

Dustin and Steve nodded and took off from the front door, while Will closed it and barreled straight for the bedroom to change into his gear. Mike followed him, looking worried.

"You okay, Will?" Mike asked.

"Fine," Will said quickly. "We just gotta go see what's up. It's a good thing we captured that Terminator and reprogrammed it."

"I don't trust it," Mike said.

Will stopped changing into his gear and walked over to Mike. He grabbed onto Mike's hand and laced their fingers together.

"You trust me, right, Mike?" Will asked gently.

"Of course," Mike replied quickly. "I'll always trust you, Will."

"Then you can trust The Terminator we reprogrammed," Will said. "It

was my handiwork and if you can't trust that, then we're fucked."

Mike chuckled weakly as Will gave him another kiss on the cheek before he continued changing into his gear. Mike went for his gear as well and the two were ready to go in minutes.

Mike and Will set out for Jonathan and Nancy's home. When they reached it, they found the rest of their lieutenants, except for Jim of course, already gathered outside the house, their weapons at the ready. The only ones missing were Dustin and Steve, who were expected to arrive momentarily.

"Hey everyone," Will said to the assembled group. "Thanks for coming. I know everything was finished last week, but Skynet seems to have had another trick up their sleeves. We don't know what is in store for us, but we should all be prepared for anything."

"Hear hear!" cried El, causing everyone else to cheer as well.

When they were finished cheering, they heard approaching footsteps and saw Dustin and Steve approaching with a third man. However, this wasn't a man at all. It was a Terminator, identical to the one that had been sent back through time to kill Joyce. Soon after defeating Skynet, Erica and Robin had captured The Terminator and brought it back to the resistance, where Will, with help from Jonathan, Max and Erica reprogrammed it to follow Will's commands.

"Finally, the robot team is here," Lucas said with an air of annoyance directed at The Terminator.

The Terminator did not respond and instead stared at Will as if it were awaiting orders.

"Do you have any knowledge of this time displacement equipment we're about to go and look at?" Will asked.

"It is the same kind of equipment used to send back the first Terminator and James Hopper," said The Terminator in a flat voice. "The equipment was likely put into place as a contingency plan as part of Skynet's plan to ensure its existence."

"And why don't you know about the contingency plan?" Nancy

demanded.

"I was not programmed with knowledge of this second contingency," The Terminator answered. "It is likely that an advanced model of Terminator will be involved in this contingency. All T-800s were programmed with knowledge of the first contingency to kill Joyce Byers."

"All right, that's enough," Jonathan said. "We'd better get going and figure out what the contingency is before anything else happens."

"Jonathan's right," said Will. He turned to The Terminator. "You'll be leading us to this equipment."

"Affirmative, Will Byers," The Terminator replied.

The entourage of soldiers and The Terminator piled into various vehicles and drove over to the location of the time displacement field. They were lucky that Skynet had been defeated; there were no HKs or Terminators guarding the area to fight them. When they finally reached the inside of the room, they found themselves in a room nearly identical to the room where they had found the original time displacement equipment.

"Okay, Max, go to the computer and see if you can tell us where and when this equipment sent its last target," Will said.

"Got it, Will," Max said, heading to go check the computer along with Erica and Robin.

"You," Will said to The Terminator. "I want you to plug into the computer and find out anything you can tell us."

"Affirmative," said The Terminator.

The group gathered around the time displacement equipment. Max, Erica and Robin spent a few moments hacking into the computer, while The Terminator plugged into another console and was scanning for information. In just a few minutes, Max looked up from the computer.

"The equipment was used last night to send something or someone

back to Los Angeles, 2015," she said.

Mike looked over at Will, who was frowning.

"Does that year mean anything to you guys?" asked Erica.

Will shook his head and looked over at Jonathan, who shrugged.

"It is because that is when you all were children," The Terminator said as it unplugged from the console. "In 2015, Jonathan Byers was 15 years, 6 months of age and Will Byers was 13 years old, as were his friends Michael Wheeler, Dustin Henderson, Lucas Sinclair, Maxine Mayfield and adopted sister Eleanor. Nancy Wheeler, Steven Harrington and Robin Buckley were also 15, while Erica Sinclair was 10."

Everyone glanced at The Terminator as it shared this information.

"But what does that mean?" El asked The Terminator.

"It means that Skynet's contingency is to eliminate all of you as children," said The Terminator. "According to the information I have obtained, Skynet sent through a T-1000 to Los Angeles 2015. The T-1000 is an advanced prototype Terminator that Skynet was preparing to unveil before its defeat one week ago. This T-1000 is programmed to kill Jonathan and Will Byers in 2015, as well as their parents and all of their future lieutenants."

Everyone looked at one another as they all realized they were all the targets of Skynet this time around.

"What can we do?" Robin asked. "There's gotta be something we can do!"

"We can't make someone go back!" said Steve. "It would be too dangerous."

"Steve's right," said Jonathan. "If there's a prototype Terminator back there, none of us will stand a chance against it."

"But a Terminator might," said Lucas, pointing at The Terminator.

"That's right," said Will, walking over to The Terminator, which was staring back at him blankly. "We'll have to send you back through time."

"Affirmative," said The Terminator. "I calculate that is the only way to protect all of you and ensure your survival."

"Then I want you to go through the time displacement equipment and protect all of us as children," Will said. "You're to protect our families as well and to make sure that none of us are hurt. Is that understood?"

"Affirmative, Will Byers."

"And you're not to kill anyone else when you go back. Do you understand?"

"I am a Terminator," The Terminator replied.

"I'm aware of that," Will said impatiently. "Look, just do your best not to kill anyone, all right?"

"Affirmative."

"And you're to follow all of the orders that either Jonathan or I give you in 2015," Will said.

"And you're to take suggestions from the others as well," Jonathan added. "But you're to take all orders from Will and me."

"Affirmative."

"And while you're at it, you can take orders from our parents as well," Will said. "They won't take too kindly to you, but when they learn Jonathan and I sent you, they will understand."

"Affirmative," said The Terminator. "Is that all, Jonathan and William Byers?"

"Just be careful," said Will.

"Understood," said The Terminator as it started to strip off its

clothing.

Will turned to Max and Erica and nodded at them. The two of them started typing into the computer and programming the time displacement field to send The Terminator back to 2015.

Will watched The Terminator stand into the time displacement field. Now that he was about to send The Terminator back to protect his younger self, he no longer thought of The Terminator as a machine. Rather, it was a Guardian that he was sending back in order to ensure his survival. Will grinned at that thought and hoped his younger self would forgive him for what he was about to put young Will through.

The time displacement field fired up. Just as it had when Jim went back through time, the two large bars of the field started to spin rapidly. The Terminator did not flinch as it was lifted slowly into the air. Soon, the familiar blue ball started to form around The Guardian. Will locked eyes with The Guardian and they both nodded at each other just as the time displacement field surrounded The Guardian and sucked it through time, sending it back.

Notes for the Chapter:

Happy Wednesday, my dear readers!

As promised, here is the next chapter! It's a little shorter than the rest (although the last one was shorter than this one), and it's meant to serve as a bridge between part one and part two of the story.

From here on, the story will loosely follow the plot of Terminator 2. I've kept most of the major plot points, but I've changed some minor things and the ending is super different. I think you'll enjoy it!

See you Friday for the first chapter of part two!

9. Los Angeles, 2015

Summary for the Chapter:

The Guardian arrives in 2015 and begins its mission. Mike and Will spend some time together before heading to the mall to join Dustin and Lucas for a day at the arcade. Meanwhile, Joyce Byers is locked up in a mental institution and plotting her escape.

Part Two

The wind started picking up as the time displacement equipment was sending The Guardian to a spot to generate in 2015. It was an area where several semi trucks were parked. Lightning bolts accompanied the wind that was blowing just as a ball of energy appeared for a few seconds before it exploded, damaging some of the semi trucks in the process.

As the wind died down again and the lightning strikes faded out, The Guardian woke up from its hibernation. It slowly stood up, getting a bearing on its surroundings. It looked around the area, seeing only semi trucks at first before it looked behind itself. A short distance away, there was a bar, and The Guardian's programming told it to go to the bar to obtain proper clothing in order to blend in with humans.

The Guardian's CPU scanned the vehicles parked outside of the bar as The Guardian passed them. It determined the type of each car and motorcycle, before it set its programming on a Harley Davis motorcycle. The Guardian ignored the specifics of the motorcycle; instead it focused its attention on finding the owner, who The Guardian assumed was in the bar.

As soon as The Guardian entered the bar, several of the patrons looked up to see who had walked in. Several of the men looked away when they saw The Guardian; all they saw was a naked man walking into the bar. Some of the women were trying to get a better look while others were simply ignoring The Guardian..

The Guardian spared little attention to anyone in the room, instead scanning each person to try and identify the owner of the motorcycle. The Guardian's demeanor must have suggested he was someone not to cross, as none of the people he passed did more than just look at him with curious expressions on their faces.

At one point, a waitress came walking out from the kitchen and nearly stumbled into The Guardian. She gasped slightly and glanced down at The Guardian's human anatomy, eyeing him suspiciously. The Guardian ignored her and kept scanning the other humans in the bar.

To the left of the waitress was a group of bar patrons who had been playing pool, but were now watching The Guardian with interest. One man, with long brown hair and a beard to match, was dressed in an all-leather black outfit and smoking a cigar. The Guardian looked down, scanning the man and quickly determined the man was a match for the Harley Davidson motorcycle out front.

The Guardian approached the man, glaring at him slightly.

"I need your clothes, your boots and your motorcycle," The Guardian told the man.

Instead of replying right away, the man in leather burst into laughter, as did several of the other bar patrons. They laughed for several seconds as The Guardian calculated what its next move should be.

The man in leather got closer to The Guardian so he was almost in his face.

"You forgot to say 'please,'" he said in a surprisingly gentle voice.

The man lifted his cigar to his mouth and inhaled it before he blew the smoke directly into The Guardian's face. The Guardian's scanners picked up on the carcinogen smoke being blown at it just before the man stuck his cigar into a spot directly above where The Guardian would have a human heart. Clearly, the man was trying to burn The Guardian. He frowned in confusion when he saw he was having no effect on The Guardian.

Without saying a word, The Guardian grabbed on to the man's hand roughly. The man dropped his cigar and groaned louder.

"Ah!" he screamed. "Ah! Get him off me!"

Another man, who was behind The Guardian, and holding a pool cue, lifted the cue and swung it toward The Guardian's back. The cue shattered in two and The Guardian turned around, glaring at the second man. The Guardian grabbed the man's shirt before it tossed him through the bar and through one of the windows. The man landed outside on one of the cars with a thud, falling unconscious.

The Guardian then picked up the man in leather and threw him into the kitchen, where he landed right on the grill. The man in leather had about a split second before he felt the heat of the grill burning his flesh. He screamed out in pain as he scrambled to get off the grill and fell to the ground.

Meanwhile, a third man approached The Guardian, holding a knife. The man was quicker than The Guardian and stabbed it in the abdomen. The Guardian did not react. Instead, it yanked the man's hand off the knife and pulled the knife out from its abdomen. In one swift move, The Guardian twisted the man's arm and pushed him into the pool table before stabbing him in the back of the shoulder.

"Oh!" the man cried out in pain. "Oh, pull it out! Pull it out! Oh, pull it out!"

The Guardian glanced around at the other bar patrons, who were all quickly backing away from it. It quickly calculated that none of the other patrons would pose a threat to it. The Guardian then turned and headed into the kitchen.

The man in leather scooted away from The Guardian on the floor, pulling out a handgun and readying it to fire at The Guardian. But The Guardian was faster and it picked up the handgun from the man in leather and finished loading it. The man in leather then reached into his pocket and pulled out a set of keys, his hands shaking rapidly.

"Take it," he said in a shaky voice before he threw the keys at The

Guardian, who caught it with ease.

"That is not all that I require," The Guardian said, glancing at the man's clothes. The man in leather groaned as it took off his jacket first and then his shirt.

It was about ten minutes later before The Guardian had changed into the man in leather's clothes. Its computer informed it that this clothing would be sufficient for The Guardian to blend in to carry out its mission. The Guardian walked back through the bar, where the rest of the patrons were minding their business. The man who The Guardian had stabbed was nowhere to be found.

The patrons did not spare The Guardian any looks as it walked to the front door and opened it, stepping back into the night air. The Guardian slowly walked down the steps before pausing on the sidewalk. The Guardian glanced around, its systems calculating the quickest route to its query. When The Guardian had picked a route, it walked over to the motorcycles parked in front of the bar.

The Guardian hopped onto the motorcycle and started it up with the key the man in leather had provided. The Guardian was just about to take off when there was the sound of a loud gunshot behind it. The Guardian turned around to see one of the bar patrons holding a shotgun and aiming it right at The Guardian.

"You can't leave and take the man's wheel, son," the man said. "Now get off before I put you down."

The Guardian put the motorcycle's kickstand back down before it got off the motorcycle. As it walked toward the man, The Guardian scanned the shotgun he was holding. The Guardian calculated the shotgun was a six-shot Winchester Model 1887 that was sawed-off. The Guardian knew this weapon would be sufficient in helping it carry out its mission.

"That's it, goddamnit," the man said as The Guardian reached him.

Without saying anything, The Guardian roughly grabbed the shotgun out of the man's hands. Immediately the man's hands flew up in surrender and he started to back away slowly. When the man's back

hit the bar door, The Guardian was nearly on top of him. The Guardian reached into the man's shirt pocket and pulled out a pair of sunglasses. The Guardian shook the sunglasses open before putting them on. It turned around and walked back down the stairs and back over to the motorcycle, putting the shotgun into a holder on the motorcycle and firing it up again.

The Guardian took off quickly from the bar, speeding along the road as it headed toward its next destination and calculating what its next move should be to protect Jonathan and Will Byers.

Mike hopped out of Nancy's car and walked up the steps to the Byers house. He knocked on the door and only had to wait about 10 seconds before the door opened and Jonathan opened the door.

"Hey Jonathan, Nancy is waiting for you," Mike said.

Jonathan nodded.

"Thanks, Mike. You and Will have fun today and stay safe, all right?"

"We're always safe, Jonathan," Mike said before he headed into the house while Jonathan walked out to Nancy's car.

Nancy and Jonathan had been dating for about six months. Both Mike and Will were a little surprised when their older siblings started dating each other. But as time went on, they had gotten used to the idea, and it basically meant that Mike had more time to spend with Will whenever Nancy would pick up Jonathan for a date while dropping off Mike to hang out with Will, and occasionally with El, who was Will's adopted sister. Mike and El had briefly had a middle school romance that had lasted about a month, and they now realized they worked together much better as friends than as boyfriend and girlfriend.

"Hello?" Mike called into the empty living room. Apparently all of the Byers family members were in other rooms.

"In here, Mike!" came El's voice from the kitchen.

Mike grinned and walked into the kitchen and found El and Max

making lunch together.

"What's going on y'all?" Mike asked.

"Trying to be a southerner now, Wheeler?" asked Max, lightly punching Mike on the arm.

Mike rolled his eyes.

"Just trying to make conversation. Where's Will?"

"He's just finishing getting dressed," El replied. "He was a little late in waking up this morning. My dear little brother."

"He's not that much younger than you, El. What is it, like five days or something?"

"Three, actually, and you sound just like Will. You guys can never let me have anything, can you?" El asked, pouting slightly.

"It's just fun to mess with you," Mike said. "So, what are you two up to today?"

"We are staying in for a girl's day," said Max. "Hopper is gonna be hiding in the bedroom all day while we're out here watching movies and talking about boys."

Mike grimaced slightly.

"I'm sure Lucas will love you talking about your love life with him, Max," Mike said.

Max and El glanced at each other and giggled slightly just as Will walked into the room. Mike beamed at Will, who smiled back at him, blushing slightly.

"Hey, Mike," said Will with an air of nervousness. "How're you doing?"

"Pretty good, Will," said Mike. "Ready to go hang out with Dustin and Lucas at the mall?"

"Yeah, but first we gotta do a little work on my dirt bike," Will said. "It's been having some issues with starting and stopping; I think it just needs a little oiling done."

"Well we'd better get to it then," said Mike. "We don't wanna have the arcade get busy before we get there!"

Mike and Will left the kitchen, bidding farewell to the girls. When the boys were out of earshot, Max turned to El.

"So, who do you think is gonna tell first?" she asked.

El shrugged.

"It's hard to say," she said. "It could be either one of them. I wish they would just hurry up and admit it to each other. This whole 'dancing around their feelings' thing is getting old quick."

"I hear you," said Max, picking up her drink and mimicking toasting El.

Outside, Mike and Will were bent down on the ground, having a look at Will's motorbike. Will was doing most of the work while Mike was watching. Mike had never been one for mechanical things, but it had always seemed to come naturally to Will.

"You're so good at stuff like this, Will," said Mike while Will was oiling the motorbike. "I don't know how you do it. All this stuff would confuse the heck out of me."

"Ah it's nothing, Mike," said Will. "When you've done it once, you've basically done it a hundred times."

When Will was finished oiling one of the parts, he stood up and fired up his motorbike's engine. It immediately roared to life and Will tested the motor on it and saw that it was working properly again. Mike beamed at Will and gave him a high-five before Will turned off the motorbike again and went to put away the tools he had taken out to have a look at the motorbike.

Will's father had appeared in the doorway and was now walking down the steps into the driveway. Mike looked over at Hopper, who

nodded briefly at Mike. Mike always felt intimidated by Will's father and even told Will once that he thought Hopper didn't like him. Will refuted this, saying that his Dad was just a hard person to read for a lot of people and that he didn't mean anything by his gruff demeanor.

"Where are you boys off to today?" asked Hopper when he reached the boys.

"We're meeting Dustin and Lucas at the mall for lunch and then we're gonna be playing games in the arcade this afternoon," said Will. "Dustin has a record he's trying to break, so I'm sure he's gonna be focused on that."

"Well you boys have fun today," Hopper said. "And Will, you stay safe out there, you hear?"

Will rolled his eyes slightly, hoping that his father wouldn't notice.

"I'm always careful, Dad."

"I know you are, son, but you can never be too careful."

"All right, Dad, we'll see you later. Have fun hanging out with Max and El."

Hopper nodded at Will before he turned and walked back into the house. Will hopped onto his motorbike and put on his helmet before he handed the spare helmet to Mike, who jumped onto the motorbike as well.

"What's with your Dad and Jonathan always telling you to be safe?" Mike asked. "I mean, not that I don't want you to be safe too, but they seem to always tell you over and over to be safe."

"It's a long story," Will replied simply, not wanting just yet to tell Mike everything about what he knew about the future and both of their roles in it. Instead, Will took off on the motorbike, with Mike clutching onto the back of Will's jacket for support.

It took about 15 minutes for them to reach the mall. When they arrived, Will found a spot in the parking garage and parked the bike.

When they both hopped off the motorbike, Will took his backpack from Mike and a picture fell out of one of the open pockets of the backpack. Mike bent down to pick up the picture and realized it was a picture of Joyce, Will's mother. Mike wordlessly handed the picture back to Will, who put it back into this backpack.

"How's your Mom doing?" Mike asked gently.

"I don't know," Will replied curtly. "I haven't gotten to see her in about six months. The doctors don't want her to have visitors since she's in an area with higher security at the hospital. She's up for review soon, though, so maybe I'll get to see her soon."

"I really hope you get to, Will," Mike said. "I know how much you miss her."

"Thanks, Mike," Will said, blushing slightly. "Let's go in and find Dustin and Lucas."

The young Cyberdyne Systems employee peered into the office of Scott Clarke, the director of special programming for Cyberdyne. Clarke was not in his office, so the young man huffed and started searching around for Clarke. He spotted Clarke talking to a handful of scientists in the lab and the man hurried over to Clarke.

"Mr. Clarke, the materials team..." the young man said before he realized he had run into a trash can and spilled its contents. He cursed under his breath as he hurriedly picked up the trash and righted the trash can.

The young man hurried up to Clarke.

"Mr. Clarke, the materials team is running another..." the man cut off, realizing that Clarke was not listening to him. He tapped Clarke on the shoulder. "Mr. Clarke."

"Yes?" said Clarke, turning around and giving his attention to the young man.

"The materials team is running another series this afternoon and you have to sign for...it, you have to sign it out."

Clarke grinned at the man.

"Okay, come on, I got it," he said, gesturing for the young man to follow him.

Clarke led the young man through the rest of the lab, passing more scientists who were conducting research.

"Listen, Mr. Clarke, I know I haven't been here that long, but I was wondering if you could tell me, I mean if you know."

"Know what?" asked Clarke.

"Well if you know where it came from."

"You know I asked them that very same question once and you know what they told me?" Clarke asked. The young man shook his head.

"Don't ask."

Clarke then turned to go deeper into the lab, where only authorized personnel were allowed to access. At the end of a hall was a vault where only those with the highest clearance in the building were allowed. It was so heavily guarded that there was always an armed guard on duty when the building was operating.

"Morning, Mr. Clarke," said the guard.

"How's it going?" asked Clarke.

The guard stood up and pulled out a key to the vault. On the opposite side of the door, Clarke inserted his own key.

"Left on three, two, one, turn," said the guard.

Together, the guard and Clarke both turned their keys, opening up the vault for Clarke to enter it. The guard opened the door for Clarke.

"How are the wife and kids?"

"They're great, thanks," said Clarke, patting the guard on the shoulder before walking into the vault.

The vault was rather narrow, given that it only hid two parts inside it. Clarke pressed a panel to let the smaller of the pieces out. The smaller piece was an advanced chip of some sort that had been obtained from a Cyberdyne factory in 1999. Clarke had no idea where the chip came from, but it had become the basis for all of his research into a new computer program.

In the other hidden panel in the wall, the only piece from the factory came out on display. It was a mechanical arm that looked like it was designed to be on a robot of some sort. Clarke stared at the mechanical arm, still marveled at its design even more than 15 years after he first saw it.

Pescadero State Hospital for the Criminally Insane was full of some of the most mentally hardened individuals. Some were there because their mental illness had been diagnosed when they were young. Others were there because their defense attorneys had won an insanity defense. Still, some others were in there when they shouldn't be. One of those people who definitely didn't belong there, and who was desperate to get out, was Joyce Byers.

Two years earlier, Joyce had attempted to blow up a computer factory connected to Cyberdyne Systems. However, she hadn't adequately bypassed security and ended up being shot and arrested in her attempt to blow up the factory. At her trial, the prosecutors cut a deal to have Joyce committed to Pescadero under the supervision of Dr. Martin Brenner, the same man who came into contact with Joyce on the night she first encountered both Jim Hopper and The Terminator.

Ever since she had been committed to Pescadero, Joyce had tried a handful of times unsuccessfully to escape from the hospital. Every time she lost more privileges, but that didn't deter her from trying to escape. Until the last six months when she had been prevented from having visitors. Ever since then, Joyce had tried to be on her best behavior in order to be transferred to the minimum security wing. Today, she was up for review.

Ahead of going for review, Joyce was doing pull-ups in her room at Pescadero. Although her arms were straining against the pull-ups and

she was sweating profusely, Joyce didn't want to stop. She knew that as soon as she was out of the hospital, she would have to be prepared to continue guiding her sons, which is why she kept up a heavy workout routine in the hospital.

Meanwhile, Dr. Brenner was leading a group of young interns through the halls of Pescadero and started to talk to them about Joyce Byers.

"The next patient is one I'm very familiar with, I've followed her case for years," Dr. Brenner explained. "A 35-year-old female..."

Just then, a woman being escorted by an orderly in front of the entourage tried to escape from the orderly's grasp.

"Hey!" Dr. Brenner shouted, stopping in his tracks. The orderly maintained his grip on the patient's arm and continued to lead her down the hallway and away from Brenner and the interns.

"Anyway, the diagnosis for this young woman is acute schizoaffective disorder," Dr. Brenner continued as if nothing had happened. "The usual indicators: depression, anxiety, violent acting-out, delusions of persecution..."

Joyce did one more pull-up, breathing heavily before she dropped to the ground, trying to catch her breath just as Dr. Brenner and the interns turned down the hallway where her room was located.

"The delusional architect is fairly unique," Dr. Brenner said. "She believes that a machine, called a Terminator, which looked human of course, was sent back through time to kill her."

"That's original," said one of the interns.

"And also, that the father of her children is a soldier who was sent back to protect her."

"Aww," said another intern, sounding sarcastic.

"He was from the future, too," said Dr. Brenner, sounding amused. "The year, uh, 2050 if I remember correctly. It's a wonder he was able to retain custody of their children and adopt the young girl from a

friend of Joyce's." Just then, they reached Joyce's door. "And here we are."

Dr. Brenner stepped forward to the door and pressed the button on the two way-speaker.

"Morning, Joyce," Dr. Brenner said.

Joyce turned around, breathing heavily from working out.

"Good morning, Dr. Brenner," Joyce replied. "How's the knee?"

Dr. Brenner's smug demeanor dropped and he grinned nervously at Joyce.

"Fine, Joyce," he said, taking his finger off the speaker. He turned to the interns. "She, uh...stabbed me in the kneecap with my pen a few weeks ago. Repeated escape attempts."

Joyce was huffing from the work-out and looked away from Brenner and the others watching her. She felt like a lab animal being watched. The interns looked through the window of her room while Dr. Brenner talked to them. Between her heavy breathing, her eyes being haggard and her hair looking wild, Joyce thought she probably looked like she belonged where she was. She turned away from the door, determined not to give any of the unwanted visitors any more attention.

"Let's move on, shall we?" Dr. Brenner said to the interns, who all straightened up from glancing into Joyce's room and started walking away from the door.

Dr. Brenner turned to one of the orderlies walking with the group and spoke to him in a low voice.

"Douglas, I don't like seeing the patients disrupting their rooms like this," he said. "See that she takes her medicine, would you?"

"Sure, Dr. Brenner, I'll take care of it."

A while later, Joyce was in a brightly-lit interview room. She was

standing away from the table where the interview would be conducted, while Dr. Brenner was sitting in his usual spot. The two of them were watching a video recording of a previous session between them from several months earlier, just after Joyce's last escape attempt.

"...it's...like a giant strobe light, burning right through my eyes," Joyce said in a soft voice on the recording. "But somehow I can still see."

Joyce sighed deeply on the tape.

"Look, you know the dream's the same every night, why do I have to..."

"Please continue," said the voice of Dr. Brenner on the tape. Dr. Brenner was just out of frame on the video, but he could be heard scribbling down notes as Joyce spoke.

"The children look like burnt paper," said Joyce on the video. "Black, not moving. Then the blast wave hits them. And they fly apart like leaves."

On the video, Joyce is heard starting to cry as if she can't go on. The real Joyce watched herself on tape with a cold expression on her face. She looked rather indifferent about the whole thing.

"Dreams about cataclysm, or the end of the world, are very common, Joyce," Dr. Brenner told her on the tape.

On the video, Joyce cut off Brenner, her mood shifting from crying to instant rage.

"It's not just a dream!" Joyce shouted. "It's real, you moron! I know the date it happens!"

"I'm sure it feels very real to you," Dr. Brenner started but Joyce cut him off.

"On August 29, 2032, it's gonna feel pretty fucking real to you, too!" Joyce yelled. "Anybody not wearing two million sunblock is gonna have a real bad day, get it? God, you think you're safe and alive."

You're already dead. Everybody, him," she gestured to the orderly in the room with her and Brenner. "You, you're dead already! This whole place, everything you see is gone!"

Suddenly, Joyce in the tape stood up from her seat and lunged toward Dr. Brenner. The orderly in the room grabbed onto her and held her back as Joyce continued shouting at Brenner.

"You're the one living in a fucking dream, Brenner! Cause I know it happens! It happens!"

Suddenly, Dr. Brenner paused the tape, freezing it on Joyce's contorted face. The real Joyce turned away from the screen, her expression stony.

"I feel much better now," she said in a calm voice. "Clearer."

"Yes," Dr. Brenner said, nodding. "Your attitude has been much improved lately."

Joyce sat down in the chair saved from her. She had a hopeful expression on her face.

"It's helped me to have a goal, something to look forward to," she said.

"And what is that?" Dr. Brenner asked, giving Joyce one of his rare warm smiles.

"Well, you said that if I showed improvement after six months, I could be transferred to the minimum security wing and I could have visitors," Joyce said. "Well, it's been six months. And I was looking forward to seeing my husband and children."

"I see," Dr. Brenner said nodding as he glanced down at his notes before he looked back up at Joyce. "Let's go back to what you were saying about these terminator machines. Now you think they don't exist?"

"They don't exist. I know that now."

Dr. Brenner leaned back, studying Joyce heavily.

"But you've told me on many occasions about how you beheaded one in a computer factory," he said.

"If I had, there would have been some evidence," Joyce said. "They would have found something at the factory."

"I see," said Dr. Brenner, sounding thoroughly unconvinced with what Joyce was telling him. "So you don't believe anymore that the company covered it up?"

"No," Joyce said, shaking her head. "Why would they?"

Meanwhile, through the one-way mirror that looked into the interview room where Joyce and Dr. Brenner were talking, the group of interns from earlier were watching the interview. Some of them were taking notes, while others were simply fascinated by Joyce's calm demeanor that they did nothing but watch her. Some staff psychologists were also in the room, taking note of the interview and watching with some disbelief.

Joyce watched while Dr. Brenner was making notes on his notepad. He hadn't said anything for several minutes, but Joyce was dying to know if she would be allowed to move to the minimum security wing. She desperately wanted to see her husband and children and make sure they were all okay. Having no contact for six months had been killing her inside. She hoped that she had said enough to convince Brenner she was ready to be moved.

"So what do you think, doctor?" Joyce said. Dr. Brenner looked up from his note writing, his hand frozen on the spot where he had stopped. "I have shown improvement, haven't I?"

"Well, Joyce, here's the problem," Dr. Brenner said, clicking his pen and putting it in his coat pocket. "I know how smart you are. And I think you're just telling me what I wanna hear. I don't think you really believe what you've been telling me here today. I'm afraid if you let me transfer you to the minimum security ward, you'll just try to escape again."

Joyce tried not to let her emotions show. She took several deep breaths before she spoke again, speaking in a voice barely louder

than a whisper.

"You have to let me see my family," she said. "Please. Please. They're in grave danger, they're naked without me. If I could just make a phone call..."

"Fraid not, not for a while," Dr. Brenner said, shaking his head and all pleasantries had been dropped from his tone. "I don't see any choice but to recommend to the review board that you stay here for another six months."

Joyce's eyes turned cold and lethal. Just then, she leapt up from her spot and across the table, reaching for Brenner's neck. Brenner barely had time to react as Joyce roughly grabbed him, screaming at him.

"You son of a bitch, Brenner!" Joyce shouted as the orderly tried to restrain her. "You don't know what you're doing! You fuck! You're dead!"

"Get those restraints in here now!" Brenner shouted, breaking free from Joyce's grasp. A handful of attendants rushed into the room, one of them carrying a syringe to knock Joyce out. Joyce was thrashing about violently as she was restrained, all the while yelling at the orderlies that none of them knew what they were doing and that they were all dead.

Brenner straightened up and was rubbing his chest when he turned to the video camera that was recording everything that had happened.

"Model citizen," he said to the camera.

Notes for the Chapter:

Happy Friday, y'all!

Apologies that this update comes so late. I was reading a book tonight and wanted to get it finished before I jumped into reading this chapter and updating the story.

Hope you're all enjoying this story! I'm so excited to continue publishing it and can't wait for you to read

it in its entirety.

Have a great weekend, everyone! New chapter coming on Monday!

10. Mall Shootout

Summary for the Chapter:

Will and Mike hang out with Dustin and Lucas at the arcade when they realize a police officer is looking for Will. The Guardian hones it on Will's location and has the first confrontation with its nemesis, The T-1000.

Will, Mike, Lucas and Dustin walked into the arcade of the Starcourt Mall. They had just had lunch followed by dessert at Scoops Ahoy, where Steve and Robin had given them free ice cream since they were all friends. The arcade was their usual hangout in the mall and they soon found themselves crowded around Dig Dug, where Dustin worked hard to try and beat Max's high score. Unfortunately, Dustin lost his last game life before he could surpass Max's score, much to his dismay.

"Son of a bitch," Dustin complained when his character lost its last life and the game displayed a "game over" screen.

"Too bad, Dustin," Will said in an amused tone. "Maybe next time you'll be able to beat Max's score."

"Why can't I try again?"

"Because some of us wanna actually play games instead of just watching you," Lucas said, rolling his eyes slightly.

"All right, fine, let's go find some games to go play," Dustin said, relenting.

The four boys walked further into the arcade. They saw a police officer walking around, holding a phone and showing it to some of the arcade goers. For some reason, the sight of the officer sent a cold chill down Will's spine, but he couldn't explain why. Instead, he shrugged it off and joined Mike in playing a game of Galaga.

A few minutes later, the four boys found themselves an air hockey

table. Dustin and Lucas glanced at each other intently, and both Mike and Will groaned, knowing that Dustin and Lucas wanted to play air hockey.

"You're going down, Sinclair," said Dustin, getting into his spot on the table.

"Over my dead body, Henderson," said Lucas, looking mischievous.

"Okay, well you two have fun trying to break the damn air hockey table," Mike said with an air of amusement. "We're gonna go find some more games to play."

Mike pulled Will away from the hockey table and the two walked a few steps before they found a few games to try out. Will threw himself into a Star Wars arcade game, while Mike was trying a "shoot 'em up" zombie game. They both focused on their games for the next little while before Mike ran out of lives in the zombie game.

"Well so much for that," Mike said grumpily. He reached into his pocket to continue the game and realized that he was out of tokens. "Hey, Will, I'm outta tokens. I'm gonna go get some more, you need anything?"

"I'm good, Mike, thanks," Will said, not looking up from the game.

Mike grinned at Will's enthusiasm before he walked off to the nearest token machine. Mike inserted a five dollar bill into the machine and held out his hands to catch his tokens. He pocketed his tokens and was just about to walk away when he heard a voice that caught his attention.

"Girls, do you know Will Byers?"

Mike glanced up and saw the police officer was holding a picture of Will on his phone. Mike's heart sank when he saw Will's photo and he started running through his head why the police officer was searching for Will. Mike managed to duck his head so the officer wouldn't see him watching and he started to walk back to Will when the officer stopped him.

"Hey, do you know this kid?" the officer asked, brandishing his

phone.

Mike took the phone and pretended to look at the picture of Will, his heart racing slightly.

"Nah I don't know him," Mike said, handing the officer back his phone.

Mike didn't spare the officer another glance. He hurried away from the officer and back over to Will, who was still heavily engaged in the Star Wars game.

"Will!" Mike exclaimed when he reached the game.

"Not now, not now," Will said, still focused on the game.

"Hey, Will, that cop we saw earlier is scoping for you, check it out."

"What?" Will said, frowning as he looked up from the game at Mike, who had a serious expression on his face. Will glanced over Mike's shoulder and saw the police officer questioning someone before pointing in his direction.

"Look, Will, maybe you should just get out of here," Mike said. "I'll get Dustin and Lucas and we'll leave, too."

"Yeah," Will said, standing up from the game and running away from it. He glanced at Mike, who gestured for him to keep running as the officer started to follow in Will's footsteps.

Will pushed through the doors at the back of the arcade and found himself in a hallway that was usually reserved for employees. Will had no time to dwell on his surroundings and instead took off running down the hallways, going as fast as he could. He guessed these hallways would lead to the parking garage and he would be able to escape on his motorbike. Will couldn't help but worry about Mike and the others, wondering if they had gotten away before the police officer could stop them.

Will had just run past a vending machine when he saw a mall employee walking toward him. He kept running, ignoring the employee yelling at him that he wasn't supposed to be in these

hallways. Will opened the next door and froze when he saw someone else approaching him.

This man was rather tall and holding a long brown flower box. The man was dressed in all-leather clothing and had on sunglasses. Will recognized this man as matching the description of The Terminator who had tried to kill his mother in 1999. His parents had told him and Jonathan all about The Terminator when they were younger, but Will hadn't really believed in it until now.

The Terminator opened the box and pulled out a shotgun that was stowed inside. He cocked the gun as he kept walking down the hallway toward Will.

Will turned and started to run away from The Terminator, heading toward a side door and trying it. To Will's dismay, the door was locked. He turned to try and keep running when he saw the police officer rounding the corner at the opposite end of the room. Will glanced at The Terminator and The Terminator pointed its shotgun down the hallway. Will whipped around at the police officer, who was pulling out his own handgun and pointing it at The Terminator. Did the police officer somehow know what The Terminator was?

Will glanced back at The Terminator, whose gaze seemed fully concentrated not on him, but on the police officer.

"Get down," said The Terminator.

Will obeyed and dropped to his knees just before The Terminator fired a round at the police officer. The shot echoed loudly throughout the room and Will screamed in terror. He glanced over at the officer, who had stumbled slightly but was straightening his stance. Will noticed what appeared to be a large bullet hole in the officer's chest, but with some sort of silver substance surrounding it instead of blood. And suddenly Will realized that the police officer was a Terminator of some sort.

Will didn't have time to consider this as The Terminator with the shotgun roughly picked up Will and shoved him in front of him. Just then, the police officer Terminator started firing at the Terminator holding Will. Will screamed in terror as he heard the gunshots, but he

didn't feel any pain and he realized at this Terminator was behaving like a Guardian and protecting him from the gunfire.

When the other Terminator ran out of bullets and was reloading his gun, The Guardian slammed his arm into the door Will had tried to open and shoved Will inside. Will fell into the storage closet with a thud and he could see through the broken door as The Guardian turned around to face the other Terminator.

The Guardian cocked its shotgun before it fired at the other Terminator. The Guardian fired five more shots at the other Terminator before it fell to the ground with a thud. The Guardian cocked its gun and started to reload the shotgun as it stood over the second Terminator. Within moments, the second Terminator healed itself and the bullet wounds disappeared. The second Terminator then stood up and reached for The Guardian's shotgun. The Guardian tried to yank the shotgun away, but the second Terminator was stronger.

After two failed attempts to get his shotgun back, The Guardian let go of the gun and instead grabbed the second Terminator and shoved him into the wall, causing the wall to get a little damage. The Guardian then lifted the other Terminator and pushed him into the wall opposite the first one. The second Terminator then shoved the Terminator into the second wall as well before lifting him and throwing him through the first wall, which broke from the pressure and the two went stumbling through it.

Will watched both Terminators disappear through the wall and he stepped out of the storage closet and ran down the hallway where The Guardian had appeared, running as fast as he could to reach the parking lot.

Meanwhile, both Terminators had landed into a store. The second Terminator was throwing The Guardian around the store. It threw The Guardian into a display and The Guardian fell to the ground with a thud. The second Terminator picked up The Guardian again and spun him around before sending him flying through the display window of the store. The Guardian landed on its back on the outside of the store.

The second Terminator glanced at a display, frowning slightly at it being silver like its skeleton before it stalked off to chase after its target.

It took a few moments for The Guardian to recover from being thrown. A crowd had started to gather around The Guardian, some taking pictures of it with their phones. The Guardian ignored the crowd as it got back to its feet, shaking off the glass before walking back in through the broken window and after its quarry.

Meanwhile, Will kept running down the hallways, trying to get to the parking garage and away from the Terminators as quickly as possible. Though he was confused about one of the Terminators seemingly helping him, he knew how difficult they were to fight and he didn't trust The Guardian at all.

When Will reached the parking garage, he ran quickly to his motorbike and hopped onto it, trying to get it started. The motorbike stalled and wouldn't start.

"Come on!" Will shouted, doing whatever he could to get the motorbike started.

Still, he was having difficulties. Will was about to start panicking when he heard the door to the parking garage open and saw the police officer Terminator walking toward him.

"Come on!" Will yelled again. This time, his motorbike roared to life and Will immediately took off on it. As he drove through the parking garage, he glanced behind him and saw The Terminator chasing him on foot, never seeming to tire due to its metal body. Will eventually drove his motorbike to the main road, narrowly avoiding colliding with a woman who was walking near the garage's entrance.

Will turned down the street to try and get away from The Terminator, who was still chasing him on foot. He pulled out in front of a semi truck, which swerved to avoid hitting Will, the driver cursing slightly. The Terminator changed tactics and hopped onto the truck, making its way to the driver's side door. When it reached the door, The Terminator reached inside and grabbed the driver by the shirt before throwing the driver out onto the street.

The Terminator shut the driver's side door and stepped on the gas pedal, giving chase to Will. Will glanced behind him and saw The Terminator now in the truck and turned down a side street that would lead to the sewers.

Meanwhile, The Guardian came speeding out from the parking garage on its motorcycle, pulling out directly in front of some incoming cars and causing them to crash. The Guardian spared the cars no attention, and instead scanned the streets looking for its target and eventually spotting Will turning into the sewer lines. The Guardian turned down a side street that would allow it to follow Will from a distance and keep an eye on him.

Will traveled through the sewer roads, noticing that the semi had stopped chasing him. He gripped onto the breaks of his motorbike and brought it to a halt. Will caught his breath for a few seconds, looking behind him for any sign of the truck. Suddenly, Will heard tires screeching from somewhere above him. He looked up and saw the semi truck crash through the wall of the overpass above Will and crash down into the sewer level where Will was waiting.

Will took off on his motorbike as the semi truck started to give chase. He was able to stay ahead of the semi truck, though the truck was slowly gaining ground on him as they continued on through the streets.

The Guardian followed Will and the semi truck on the side roads. It kept its attention focused on Will, monitoring his vital signs from a distance. Will's heart speed was racing and the Guardian knew it would have to reach Will quickly, or else risk Will over-correcting on his motorbike and possibly falling off. The Guardian used its shotgun to shoot through some locked gates as it advanced down the road, watching Will and the semi.

At the final gate that would lead directly into the sewer system, The Guardian fired a shot at the gate, breaking the lock and pushing through the gate with its motorcycle. The Guardian fired a few shots at the semi, but they did not damage the truck. Soon, The Guardian reached the edge of the road and drove the motorcycle off it, landing onto the sewer line with a thud.

The Terminator in the truck noticed The Guardian's reappearance and started to swerve the truck to the sides to push The Guardian into the walls. But The Guardian was faster since it was on a much smaller vehicle. The Guardian drove the motorcycle in between the semi and a wall just before the semi crashed into the wall. This brought The Guardian next to Will.

The Guardian reached over and grabbed Will by the backpack, lifting him from his motorbike. Will shrieked as he was lifted into the air and put onto The Guardian's bike. Will's motorbike fell to the ground and it was run over by the semi truck, destroying it. The Guardian pulled out its shotgun and cocked it before shooting at the semi truck. The blast hit one of the semi's tires, flattening it.

The loss of one of the tires caused the semi truck to start spiraling out of control. The Guardian returned its attention forward, putting down the shotgun and driving underneath another overpass. The semi truck, however, couldn't go under the underpass and instead crashed into it, ripping apart the top of the semi truck and causing it to come to an abrupt stop.

Moments after the crash, the semi truck suddenly exploded into flames due to the gas leaking from the semi. Will flinched as he felt the force of the explosion even on the motorcycle. The Guardian drove the motorcycle about a dozen yards away from the underpass before it braked and brought the motorcycle to a stop.

Both Will and The Guardian looked behind them to see the flames flying through the air from the explosion. They both sensed some movement, so The Guardian pulled out its shotgun again, cocking it and pointing it at the wreckage. A lone tire came rolling out of the wreckage and toward The Guardian and Will. The Guardian scanned the wreckage and didn't find any sign of its enemy, though it knew its enemy wasn't defeated. The Guardian put down the shotgun before firing up the motorcycle again and taking off.

Just as The Guardian took off on the motorcycle, there were footsteps echoing from near the wreckage. In seconds, a figure appeared in the fire. At first, it appeared to just be an outline, walking slowly and calmly through the flames as if the flames had no effect on it. The figure emerged from the flames, but it was anything but human. It

looked like a smooth chrome man. With each step the figure took, detail returned. First the shape and line of its clothing -- the police outfit -- emerged from the liquid chrome surface, then the finer details, buttons, facial features and ears appeared.

With its final step away from the wreckage, the color returned to normal. The police officer had reappeared and was looking around for signs of its prey, though it knew that it hadn't yet carried out its mission.

The Guardian drove the motorcycle back onto the main road as if nothing unusual had happened. Will craned his neck to get a look at whatever it was he was riding with. A million thoughts were racing through his head and he knew that he needed some answers as soon as possible.

"Okay, time out!" he shouted. "Stop the bike! Come on, time out, stop the bike!"

The Guardian immediately complied and pulled over into a small alleyway. The motorcycle came to a stop and Will hopped off of it, staring at his rescuer and trying to make sense of the whole thing. Meanwhile, The Guardian calmly took out the shotgun and started to reload it.

"Holy shit," Will muttered. "Now don't take this the wrong way, but you are a Terminator, right?"

"Yes," said The Guardian. "Cyberdyne Systems, Model 101."

"No shit," Will whispered, leaning forward and putting his finger through one of the bullet holes in the leather jacket. Will realized there was blood on the jacket, but The Guardian wasn't fazed by it.

"Holy shit, you're really real!" Will exclaimed. "I mean, whoa!" Will stepped back slightly. "You're uh...like a machine underneath, right? But sort of alive outside?"

"I'm a cybernetic organism," said The Guardian. "Living tissue over metal endoskeleton."

Will leaned forward again and this time poked The Guardian's cheek, feeling there was something sturdier than bone beneath it.

"Oh this is intense," Will whispered. "Get a grip, Will. Okay. Uh, you're not here to kill me. I figured that part out for myself. So what's the deal?"

"My mission is to protect you," said The Guardian as it put away the shotgun, having finished reloading it.

"Oh yeah?" said Will. "Who sent you?"

The Guardian looked right at Will.

"You did," he said. "Thirty-five years from now, you reprogrammed me to be your protector here, in this time."

"And I'm guessing you're here to protect my brother as well."

"Yes. Jonathan and Will Byers are the keys to the Human Resistance. I was programmed to protect you and your brother in this time. As well as your parents and your future lieutenants."

"My future lieutenants?" Will asked. "Who are they?"

Though Will already knew the answer to the question, he wanted to hear it directly from The Guardian.

"Michael Byers, Lucas Sinclair, Dustin Henderson, Eleanor Byers, Maxine Mayfield, Steven Harrington, Nancy Wheeler, Robin Buckley and Erica Sinclair," said The Guardian. "They are now the targets of Skynet in this time, along with you, your brother and your parents."

"This is intense," Will muttered.

Will paused in the driveway and turned to The Guardian, who was following him up the steps.

"Listen, I should warn you that my Dad isn't going to be trusting of you," he said. "We're gonna have to be patient with him and explain everything so he understands."

"Affirmative," said The Guardian.

Will nodded before he pulled out his key to the house and unlocked the door. Immediately, Will was grabbed by Hopper, who had a gun pointed directly at The Guardian.

"Get in, Will!" Jim barked, shoving Will toward Jonathan and El, who both had guns pointed at The Guardian as well.

"Dad, wait!" Will shouted.

"Quiet! Do you know what this thing is? These things are next to impossible to destroy, Will. You need to let me handle it!"

"But Dad!"

"Jim Hopper, my mission is to protect you," said The Guardian as it slowly walked into the house.

"You stay back, you son of a bitch machine!" Jim snarled, pointing the gun directly at The Guardian's head, looking manic.

"Dad," Will said in a calm voice. "You need to listen to him. Please."

Jim hesitated, lowering the gun slightly and looking at Will with a confused expression.

"Why should we trust it?" Jim asked.

"Because I'm the one who sent him back through time," Will said.

Jim turned to face The Guardian, holding up the gun again.

"Prove that," he ordered The Guardian.

"Jonathan and Will Byers gave you a message to give to Joyce Byers before you traveled back to 1999," The Guardian said. "The message contained the phrase 'The Future is not set. There is no fate but what we make for ourselves.'"

Jim gasped as he lowered the gun again. It was clear he was letting his guard down and was starting to believe what The Guardian was

telling him.

"How do you know that?" Jim demanded.

"Will Byers told me the same message in 2050," The Guardian replied. "He gave me that message shortly after reprogramming me to serve him. After the Resistance blew the original time displacement equipment, I was captured by Resistance and reprogrammed. A week after the first Terminator and you went back, Dustin Henderson and Steven Harrington discovered evidence of another time placement field."

Finally, Jim lowered his gun completely. He turned to Jonathan and El and nodded at them. Slowly, both Jonathan and El lowered their guns before Will nodded at The Guardian. The five of them proceeded to the living room, where the Byers kids sat down on the sofa while Jim sat on his recliner.

"There is another Terminator out there," Will explained. "We've been targeted by Skynet again."

"Is it a Terminator like you?" asked Jim in a gruff voice.

"Not like me. A T-1000," said The Guardian. "Advanced prototype."

"You mean it's more advanced than you are?" asked Jonathan.

"Yes. It's a mimetic polyalloy."

"What does that mean?" asked El.

"Liquid metal," said The Guardian.

"So what are we dealing with?" asked Jim.

"The T-1000 is an advanced Terminator that can take the form of anything it samples by physical contact."

"Are you saying it can imitate anything it touches?" asked Will.

"Anything it samples by physical contact," The Guardian repeated.

"So it could disguise itself as a pack of cigarettes?" asked Jonathan.

"No. Only an object of equal size."

"Well, why doesn't it become a bomb or something to come and get us?" El asked.

"It can't form complex machines," said The Guardian. "Guns and explosives have chemicals, moving parts. It doesn't work that way. But it can form solid metal shapes."

"Like what?" asked Jim.

"Knives and stabbing weapons."

"Tell them about the T-100's mission," Will instructed.

"The T-1000's primary objective is to eliminate Jonathan and Will Byers as children to prevent their rise in the Resistance," said The Guardian in its flat tone of voice. "In addition, The T-1000 is programmed to eliminate the future lieutenants who will serve under Jonathan and Will Byers in the future."

"So we need to gather everyone up and get them to our bunker," said Will in a commanding voice.

"And we need to get your mother out of Pescadero," said Jim, looking determined.

"Negative," said The Guardian. "The T-1000's highest probability for success now would be to copy Joyce Byers and wait for Jonathan and Will Byers to make contact with her."

"Oh, great," said Jonathan. "And what happens to her?"

"Typically, the subject being copied is terminated," The Guardian said matter-of-factly.

"Shit! Why didn't you say something?" Will shouted. "We gotta go right now."

"Negative. It's not a mission priority."

"Well, fuck you, she's a priority to us!" Will yelled.

"We're not going into hiding without her!" Jonathan exclaimed.

"You piece of shit machine, we're not gonna leave her behind, your mission priorities be damned," Jim snarled.

"We're going to go get her out of the hospital and you're gonna help us do that," said Will, glaring at The Guardian.

"Affirmative," said The Guardian.

Will frowned, looking to his siblings and father before he turned back to The Guardian.

"Just like that, you're agreeing with us?"

"Because you told me to," said The Guardian.

"What?" Will muttered before something dawned on him. "You have to do whatever Jonathan and I say, huh?"

"It's one of my mission parameters," said The Guardian.

"Look, if you guys are done, we're wasting time here," said El. "We need to come up with a plan to get everyone into hiding and to get Joyce out of the hospital!"

"El's right," Jim said. "El and I will gather Dustin, Lucas, Erica and Max and get them back here quickly, along with their families. Jonathan, I want you to get in touch with Robin and Steve and get them here quickly."

Jonathan nodded at his father.

"Will, I'll leave you and your friend here to go and pick up Mike and Nancy at their house," Jim said. "We'll regroup here and I'll get everyone to our bunker near the Mexican border. We'll wait for you at the bunker to arrive with your mother."

"Okay," Will said. He turned to The Guardian and glared at him.

"I'm gonna go get my best friend and his sister and then I'm gonna go get my Mom," he explained. "And I order you to help me."

"Affirmative," said The Guardian.

Joyce sat in a dark interview room, her face appearing catatonic. With her in the room was Dr. Brenner, who was standing off to the side, two detectives who were sitting at the interview table with Joyce, along with an armed guard and Douglas the orderly standing off to the side as well. One of the detectives was placing down a series of photos in front of Joyce. The photos were surveillance images from the Los Angeles Police Station where Joyce had been present when the first Terminator stormed in and started an onslaught of officers. Joyce had escaped with Jim before The Terminator had found them, delaying their inevitable confrontation.

"These were taken at the West Highland Police Station in 1999," said one of the detectives. "You were there. He killed seventeen police officers that night. Do you recognize him?"

Joyce remained silent, though the sight of the first Terminator rattled her slightly. She didn't want to show any sign of emotion as she was planning her next move without the others in the room realizing it.

The second detective slapped another pair of photos down on the table. Joyce noticed it was a picture of The Terminator again, though it looked like this photo was taken more recently than the other.

"These were taken in a mall in Reseda today," said the second detective.

Still, Joyce said nothing, despite feeling nervous that someone who looked almost identical to The Terminator had been photographed earlier that day, if what the detectives were telling her was true.

"Ms. Byers, we've told you that your son was spotted at this mall today on surveillance," said the first detective. "That there is no answer at your home. We know this guy is involved somehow. Does that mean anything to you? Don't you care?"

Joyce simply stared at the pictures in front of her, staying as silent as ever. The second detective waved his hand in front of Joyce's face and she didn't react to it.

"We're wasting our time," he said.

"Sorry, guys," said Dr. Brenner, speaking now for the first time. "She grows more and more disconnected from reality as time goes on."

As Dr. Brenner spoke, Joyce glanced down and spotted the paperclip that had been holding the pictures together. Her hand crept along the edge of the table and she quickly grabbed the paperclip, hiding it between her fingers. Her movements were so subtle that nobody noticed her grabbing the paperclip.

"If there's any change, I'll be in touch," said Dr. Brenner. He then turned to Douglas. "Douglas, take her back to her room."

"Yes, sir," said Douglas before he walked over to Joyce, who still looked catatonic. "Come on, sweetheart," he said as he picked up Joyce from the chair and started leading her out of the interview room and back to her cell.

Notes for the Chapter:

Happy Monday, lovely readers!

As promised, here is the next chapter! This one is a little longer, so hopefully it'll keep you busy reading before Wednesday's update!

Hope you're all enjoying this story! I'm a little sad that it's soon coming to an end, but I'm excited for you all to read it in its entirety (I am too!)

11. Escape from Pescadero

Summary for the Chapter:

Will and The Guardian pick up from Mike his home and head to Pescadero to break Joyce out of the hospital. Meanwhile, Joyce puts her own plan of escape into action.

Will hurried up to the front door of Mike and Nancy's home, The Guardian trailing him. Will wracked on the door heavily for a few seconds before the door opened and Will saw Mike standing in the doorway.

"Will! Thank god you're okay!" Mike exclaimed when he saw his best friend. Then Mike saw The Guardian standing behind Will. "Who's your friend?"

"No time to explain, Mike," Will said hurriedly. "Is everyone else home?"

"Yeah, why?"

"Tell them that they need to get into Nancy's car and they all need to go to my house right away," Will said. "We don't have time to explain, but Dad will tell them everything they need to know at the house."

"Will, what's going on?"

"Mike, please. I'll explain on the way, I promise. You're gonna come with me and him," Will said, gesturing to The Guardian. "We're gonna go and get my Mom and get her out of that hospital. Just please, trust me, Mike."

"Of course," Mike said, nodding at Will.

Will smiled to himself as Mike turned around and started shouting into the inside of his house. Mike always seemed to respond instantly any time Will told Mike to trust him and it had worked like a charm this time around.

Douglas inched up the last of Joyce's restraints on her bed. Joyce had remained silent the entire time Douglas had put the restraints on her and still seemed as catatonic as she had been while being questioned by the detectives.

When he was finished, Douglas leaned down at Joyce, looking at her. He bent down closer to Joyce, looking as if he was going to kiss her. Instead, Douglas ran his tongue across Joyce's face like a dog would. Joyce didn't seem to notice, instead staring blankly ahead. Douglas smirked and stood up from Joyce's bed. He made sure the restraints and bed was secure before he left the room and started walking down the hallway, banging his nightstick against the wall as he patrolled.

Joyce, meanwhile, waited until she heard the tapping get further away from her room. When the tapping grew faint, Joyce snapped out of her trance. She spit out the paperclip that she had grabbed in the interview room. It landed next to her left hand, and Joyce picked it up, awkwardly spreading it open into a straight piece of wire. With slow concentration, she moved it toward the lock of the restraints and started fiddling with it to get herself free.

"I know it sounds crazy, Mike," Will said as The Guardian drove the Byers station wagon toward Pescadero hospital.

Will had spent the last several minutes explaining the future war to come and everything that he knew at this point in his life. Mike had listened with rapt attention and hadn't interrupted Will at all. When Will had finished speaking, Mike let out a breath he hadn't realized he had been holding.

"Wow, I can't believe all of that is gonna happen," he said. "I mean, I believe you, Will. It's just a lot to take in at once."

"I know," Will said nodding. "It's definitely a lot."

"How long have you known?"

"My whole life."

Mike nodded, suddenly understanding why Will's family was always overprotective over him.

"There's something else, Mike..." Will said, hesitating.

"What is it?" Mike asked.

"I..." Will said, unable to form the words. Instead, he glanced up at the rearview mirror, where The Guardian was watching Will.

"Michael Byers is Will Byers' spouse and second-in-command," The Guardian said.

"Wait what?" Mike asked, looking shocked.

"I'm sorry, Mikey," Will said, looking away in shame. "I was gonna tell you at some point, I promise. I just wanted you to know about us in the future without feeling any pressure."

"Will, I don't feel any pressure," Mike said earnestly. "I mean it. I don't feel any pressure to feel any way about you. In fact, it's kinda nice to know that you and I are always gonna be together."

Will blushed at that and gave Mike one of his smiles. Mike smiled right back at Will and Will felt his heart rate picking up slightly.

Joyce fiddled with the lock on her restraints for several seconds. Suddenly, it unlatched, freeing both of Joyce's hands. Joyce sat up, releasing the Velcro straps on her feet. She rolled off the bed and stood up, stretching out her muscles. She then pulled her hair up and tied it into a ponytail before she headed for the door.

Joyce went straight to work on the door to her room, using the paperclip to try and pick the door open. It wasn't an easy task, but it was one of many she had picked up during her years in preparing herself for the future, and preparing her sons for what was to come.

Douglas continued tapping his nightstick against the wall as he returned to the hallway where he had started his patrol for the evening. He shined a flashlight in the windows of the cells he passed,

seeing no movement inside any of them. He rounded the hallway leading back to Joyce's room and his attention was immediately caught by the door to a utility closet being open.

Douglas walked over to the utility closet and opened the door fully, shining his light into the closet. That's when he noticed something strange. A mop that was in a bucket had part of its handle snapped off about halfway up. He glanced around the room and saw the other half of the handle was missing.

He pondered this for a moment as he shut the door. Douglas then heard a sound behind him and spun around. The missing piece of the mop handle filled Douglas' vision as it cracked viciously across the bridge of his nose.

Douglas screamed out in pain as he hit the floor like a sack of cement. His nose was bleeding from the impact and the blood was starting to spread on the floor. Joyce slapped the makeshift baton down onto Douglas again, knocking him fully unconscious.

Joyce bent down and dragged Douglas by the arms into her room. She put him next to the bed and bent down, taking Douglas' keys from his belt. Joyce then locked Douglas into her room with his own keys. She then bent down to pick up Douglas' nightstick and shoved the mop handle back into the utility closet before she started running down the hallway.

The T-1000 made its way through the reception area. It noticed a night nurse working at the welcome desk. The night nurse glanced up at the sound of The T-1000's approaching footsteps.

"Hi," said The T-1000, doing its best to sound nonchalant. "Do you have a Joyce Byers here?"

The night nurse grinned, assuming The T-1000 was there to assist the other officers who had been questioning Joyce Byers.

"You're running kinda late aren't ya?" the night nurse asked. " They've been in there about an hour. Hold on, I'll buzz you in."

Just then, the inner door opened and Dr. Brenner came walking through it with the other two officers and a night guard who worked for the hospital.

"Oh, here comes your friends now," said the night nurse, glancing up to look at The T-1000, who had vanished without a trace. The night nurse went to the counter to try and get a better look to see where The T-1000 had gone. Before she could see much, there was a knock on the solenoid door and the night nurse saw Lewis the night guard in the doorway. The night nurse buzzed Lewis in and they nodded at each other.

Lewis led Dr. Brenner and the two officers toward a side exit.

"Sorry, guys, but I gotta run," said Dr. Brenner. "Lewis will see you guys out."

"Thank you, Martin," said one of the officers.

Lewis walked the two officers out and locked the door behind them as they left. He then turned around and started walking down the hallway toward the vending machines. Just as he passed the middle of the floor, the floor suddenly started moving, but Lewis didn't notice. The floor shivered and bulged upward like a liquid mass, retaining the two-toned check board of the tile floor. The fluid mass reached a height of six feet and began to resolve rapidly into a human figure. It lost the color and texture of the tile and morphed into a carbon copy of Lewis. It was The T-1000 in disguise.

Lewis approached the vending machines and pulled out his wallet, oblivious to what was happening behind him. He glanced over at the night nurse, who had resumed her duties for the night.

"Hey, Gwen, you want some coffee?" Lewis asked.

"No thanks," replied Gwen. "How about a beer?"

"Yeah right," Lewis muttered as he made his selection for coffee.

Within seconds, the vending machine had popped out a coffee cup that was filled with black coffee. When it was ready, Lewis picked up his cup, which had playing cards depicted on it. He saw quickly that

he had three aces and two kings on his cup.

"Hey, I gotta full house!" Lewis shouted over to Gwen.

"That's good, Lewis," said Gwen, sounding thoroughly unamused.

"Must be my lucky day," Lewis said, going to get a drink of his coffee. Suddenly, he sensed something behind him and he whipped around, shocked to see someone who looked exactly like him standing behind him. Lewis watched as his double calmly raised his hand and pointed his index finger right at Lewis' eye.

In a split second, the finger speared out, elongating into a thin steel rod, which snapped out like a stiletto, slamming right into Lewis' eye. The metal finger punched right through the eye, emerging from the back of Lewis' skull.

The coffee cup fell to the ground as Lewis' body was twitching. Life was quickly leaving Lewis' body. Lewis quickly became dead weight, only being held up by the finger in his eye. After a few seconds, The T-1000 released its finger from Lewis, which morphed back into a human finger. Lewis' body fell to the ground with a thud, though it was muffled so that Gwen didn't hear it.

The T-1000 dragged Lewis' body with ease into a utility closet. When The T-1000 had let go of the body, it bent down and pulled Lewis' gun from its holster, checking to make sure that it was loaded before putting the gun in its own holster.

Joyce snuck through the hallways like a cat, barely making a sound as she advanced through the hospital. The hospital seemed relatively empty for the night, but Joyce didn't hold her breath at it being completely void of staff as she went deeper into the hospital. Indeed, as she rounded a corner, she could hear Dr. Brenner's voice talking to an attendant.

Dr. Brenner yawned as he was explaining a dosage to the attendant. Suddenly, they both looked up when they heard approaching footsteps.

Joyce tossed Douglas' keys at the attendant, who caught them above his head, leaving his midsection open. Without hesitating, Joyce nailed the attendant in the gut several times, forcing him back on his feet. The baton was moving so quickly that it was a blur. Joyce eventually smacked the attendant across the face, knocking him unconscious and to the ground.

Dr. Brenner watched Joyce attack the attendant with a shocked expression on his face. He reached for a phone to call for backup to arrive. Joyce saw this and leapt up, diving for Brenner. Joyce smacked hard on Dr. Brenner's left arm before she hit the back of his legs, causing him to fall to his knees while groaning in pain.

Joyce reached for a syringe while she checked on the attendant who had fallen to the ground. She jammed the syringe into the bottom of the attendant and injected the full amount of tranquilizer into the attendant. Joyce then reached onto a cart, grabbing some Liquid Plum'r.

"You broke my arm!" Dr. Brenner said.

Joyce stood up, carrying the Liquid Plum'r over to Brenner.

"There are 215 bones in the human body," Joyce snarled, slamming down the Liquid Plum'r next to Brenner. "That's one. Now don't move!"

Brenner nodded as Joyce jammed the empty syringe into the plastic jug. Joyce drew back the plunger, filling the syringe with blue liquid. Brenner watched Joyce in terror.

"What are you gonna do?" he whispered in a terrified tone.

The Guardian brought the station wagon to a stop outside Pescadero Hospital. Will had ordered The Guardian to stop moments before.

"Why do we stop now?" The Guardian asked in a flat tone.

"Now you gotta promise you're not gonna kill anyone, right?" asked Will.

"Right."

"You swear?" Will asked, not sounding convinced.

The Guardian whipped its head around, looking at Will with a confused expression on its face. It took all of Will and Mike's willpower not to laugh at The Guardian's expression.

"Look, just put up your hand and say 'I swear I won't kill anyone'." Will instructed.

The Guardian obliged Will, raising its right hand.

"I swear I will not kill anyone."

"All right, then, pull in," Will said, glancing at Mike, both of them grinning about The Guardian's behavior.

The Guardian pulled the car over to the gate leading to the hospital's parking lot. An armed guard was coming out of the post to speak to The Guardian, who stepped out of the car.

"Visiting hours is 10 to 4, Monday through Friday," said the guard.

The Guardian pulled out its handgun, drawing it faster than the guard could react and pull out his own weapon. The Guardian fired at the guard's leg. The guard fell to the ground screaming in pain.

"You son of a bitch! You shot me!" The Guard yelled.

"What the hell are you doing?" Will yelled out of the window of the car.

The Guardian ignored Will and instead shattered the window to the shack and pressed the button inside to open the gate. He then bent down next to the guard and picked up magazines on the guard's belt. The Guardian then got back into the car and turned around to look at Will and Mike.

"He'll live," The Guardian said shortly as it started up the car again and pulled forward. The Guardian drove through the parking lot before it headed down a ramp to an underground parking garage.

Three attendants were standing by at the security checkpoint that led into the maximum security wing of the hospital. One of the attendants, an armed guard, was reading a book quietly to herself when she looked up at the security camera and startled when she saw someone approaching on the video.

"Son of a bitch!" she shouted, getting the attention of the two other attendants.

All three of them looked up and saw Joyce approaching the security door, holding Dr. Brenner at syringe-point. The syringe was resting on Brenner's neck and Joyce was threatening to inject him.

"Let's all try to remain calm," said the armed guard, doing her best to sound as calm as possible.

"Open it or he'll be dead before he hits the floor," Joyce demanded.

The other two attendants grabbed nightsticks and walked around the desk to the entryway of the security door.

"There's no way, Byers, let him go," said the armed guard.

"Open the door!" Joyce repeated.

"It ain't gonna happen!" said the guard.

"Take it easy, Joyce, easy," said one of the other attendants, who had frequently restrained Joyce during her outbursts at the hospital.

"It won't work, Joyce," said Dr. Brenner. "You're no killer. I don't believe you'd do it."

Joyce snarled at Brenner.

"You're already dead, Brenner," she said in a cold hiss. "Everybody dies. You know I believe it. So don't fuck with me!"

"Open the door," Brenner instructed the armed guard, nodding at her as best as he could with the syringe poking his neck. "Open the door!"

The armed guard hit the solenoid button. The security door unlocked.

Brenner opened the door with his broken hand, wincing as he did.

"Back off!" Joyce yelled to the two guards. "Get back! I'll pump him full of this shit, I swear!"

"Back up, back up," said the attendant who knew Joyce.

"Don't move!" Joyce ordered.

She and Brenner got closer to the retreating guards.

"Drop the shit!" Joyce yelled.

"Do it!" yelled the guard to his compatriot. The two of them dropped their nightsticks, both of them raising their hands in surrender.

"Get in the office and on the floor," Joyce ordered. One of the guards went into the office. The armed guard dived to the floor, as did the guard. "Not you!" Joyce snapped at the guard who she knew well.

"Open the door," Joyce said, gesturing to the next door.

The guard pulled his keys out of his pocket and unlocked the door for Joyce, starting to open it.

"On the floor, hold it open, face the wall!" Joyce yelled.

The guard did as instructed and Joyce and Brenner passed by him. Joyce started backing down the hallway away from the security checkpoint, still holding her hostage. Joyce glanced down a side corridor, not seeing anyone. She took a few more steps backward, dragging Brenner with her.

Suddenly, another attendant leapt out from the shadows at Joyce and Brenner. Joyce spun around, smacking the attendant in the face before pushing him to the ground with a thud.

Joyce ignored Dr. Brenner and instead took off on foot. The other guards had noticed the attempted attack of Joyce and had all gotten back to their feet.

"Get her, get her!" Dr. Brenner yelled, checking the spot on his neck where the syringe had been for blood.

The armed guard ran back into the security checkpoint and hit a button, sounding a panic alarm throughout the hospital.

In the isolation ward, The T-1000 took on its original human appearance, finding the stunned guard on the ground, attempting to get back on his feet. The T-1000 glanced up when it heard the sound of the alarm blaring. It stepped away from the guard and started down the hallway, pulling out the pistol it had taken from Lewis' body.

Joyce, meanwhile, was snaking through the hallways as fast as her feet would carry her. She was like an animal in a maze. She turned the corner, glancing off the wall and sprinted on without slowing down. She reached a steel door and found it locked. She tore Douglas' keys off her shirt and started working to unlock the door as she heard running footsteps approaching her from behind.

At the last second, Joyce got the door open. She dived through it and slammed it shut. She turned the deadbolt knob just as the first orderly reached the door, crashing into it. Joyce turned around to keep running. A jail-cell type barred door sat between her and the corridors of the ward beyond.

Joyce sprinted to the wall of bars, jamming her key into the door as she heard the shouts of the orderlies all yelling while trying to get the first door opened. Joyce unlocked the barred door with seconds to spare. She flung herself through the bars and slammed them shut, causing the orderlies to crash into the bars. Joyce reached through the bars, turned the key and snapped it off in the lock.

Joyce took off without a glance backward down the hallway. She knew she was close to the elevators that would take her to the parking garage, where she could finally escape from the hospital for good. Joyce reached the end of the hallway and crashed into the wall, pressing the button to call an elevator.

A few seconds later, an elevator pinged to announce its arrival. Joyce turned to her left and ran toward the elevator. The doors to the

elevator opened and Joyce was just about to run inside when suddenly, someone came walking out of the elevator, causing Joyce to freeze in her tracks, gasping loudly.

The Terminator from 1999 had walked out of the elevator, dressed in all-leather clothing and wearing sunglasses, exactly as Joyce remembered it. The Terminator's head swiveled to face Joyce, who slipped on the slick tile, falling to the ground on her backside. Joyce stared at The Terminator as she started scrambling backward on the floor like a crab, spinning and clawing her way to her feet along the wall.

"No!" Joyce said. "NO!" she screamed. "NO!"

She got back to her feet and started running around the corner to the hallway she had first come down. Meanwhile, Will came flying out of the elevator, with Mike hot on his heels. Will got a brief glance of Joyce retreating and called out to his mother.

"Mom, wait!" Will shouted. "Mom!"

Joyce didn't hear him. She has fully clicked into her own nightmare, trying to put as many feet between her and The Terminator as possible. She pelted down the corridor, going back the way she came. As she reached an intersection with a cross-corridor, a white-clad figure blurred from the corner. The orderly hit Joyce in a flying tackle, sending Joyce skidding across the floor, shrieking and struggling. Two other orderlies leapt into the fray.

"No! No! No!" Joyce screamed, sounding delirious.

Meanwhile, The Guardian, Will and Mike were slowly walking down the hallway to catch up to Joyce. Will turned to the Guardian, who was a step behind him.

"Help her!" he ordered.

"Wait here," The Guardian replied, holding up his hand to stop Will in his tracks.

The orderlies had Joyce pinned to the cold tiles. Dr. Brenner soon joined the fray, leaning toward Joyce, holding a syringe with a heavy

dose of tranquilizer. Joyce craned her neck and saw the dark silhouette of the Terminator coming up behind them. Joyce screamed in utter hopelessness.

"He'll kill us all!" Joyce shouted. "He'll kill us all!"

The Guardian, holding the shotgun in one hand, reached down and grabbed one of the orderlies with his other hand. He hurled the man against the far wall of the corridor. SMACK! The orderly dropped to the floor, having shattered some glass next to Dr. Brenner, who flinched and looked up, recognizing The Guardian from the pictures shown earlier to Joyce.

The other two orderlies reacted instantly, leaping onto the intruder. The Guardian seemed to disappear for a moment amidst the orderlies before there was an explosion of white-clad figures, as the orderlies were flung outward like they had stepped on a landmine. One crashed through a window of safety glass and the other crashed into the wall face-first.

Meanwhile, the armed guard ran up to The Guardian and hit him across the face. The Guardian flinched slightly before it straightened its head, revealing the bent sunglasses on its face. The Guardian grabbed the guard's face and shoved her across the hallway, sending her flying to the ground. The Guardian took off the sunglasses and tossed them to the ground.

Will came running down the hallway as soon as the commotion stopped. He bent down next to Joyce, grabbing on to her.

"Mom, are you okay?" he asked. No response. "MOM!"

Joyce looked at Will with a look of shock etched onto her face. She looked from her son, to Mike and back to The Guardian. She thought she was hallucinating the whole thing. How could her son and her son's best friend be in the presence of a Terminator and not be under attack? This was the last thing she expected to see.

"Come with me if you want to live," The Guardian said, offering out its hand for Joyce to take.

"It's okay, Mom, he's here to help," Will said in a gentle voice. "It's okay."

Joyce, in a daze, took the huge hand in her shaking fingers. The Guardian lifted her to her feet. They stared at each other, Joyce trying to figure out exactly what was going on. But she didn't have much time to dwell on it.

The Guardian glanced up at the sound of approaching footsteps from nearby. He looked toward the barred doors Joyce had previously gone through and saw The T-1000 walking toward them. The Guardian glared at its nemesis while Joyce, Will and Mike turned to look.

The T-1000 walked forward, reaching the bars. It didn't stop. Its body divided like jello around the bars. As it squeezed itself through like metal playdough, its surface reforms perfectly on the other side. There was a clank as The T-1000 started to walk forward. It looked behind and saw that the gun was caught in between the bars. The T-1000 turned its wrist and slipped the gun edgewise through the gap.

The Guardian aimed its shotgun at The T-1000 just as the T-100 was raising its own weapon.

"Go!" The Guardian yelled to the others, firing a shot at The T-100, who stumbled when the blast hit it.

Joyce grabbed Will, who grabbed Mike, and the three of them started running back down the hallway toward the elevators. The Guardian fired a handful of shots at The T-1000 to slow it down before it turned around and followed the others. The T-1000 gave chase, firing several shots at The Guardian's back, doing no damage, but causing Dr. Brenner to wince as The T-1000 raced past him.

The Guardian reached the elevator, where the others had already taken refuge. It stood in front of Joyce, Will and Mike, taking the brunt of the last of The T-1000's bullets. The door started to close just as The T-1000 ran out of bullets and tossed the pistol to the side. The T-1000 kept running down the hall to reach its targets.

A sword-like blade rammed through in between the elevator's doors, forcing them open. Joyce, Will and Mike all gasped and ducked away from the blades. The Guardian cocked its shotgun one more time before pointing it directly into The T-1000's face and firing. The T-1000's head was blown apart by the blast and it was hurtled back. The elevator doors closed and the elevator descended.

"What the fuck is it?" Joyce demanded. "What the fuck is going on?"

Outside the elevator, the T-1000 started to heal itself. Its head reformed quickly and there was no trace of the injury. It saw the closed door and jammed its hands between them, its fingertips having become pry-bars. It pulled the bars apart with ease before it leapt down into the open shaft.

There was a loud thump on the roof of the elevator. Everyone glanced up, with The Guardian readying its weapon. Suddenly, a blade shot through the roof of the elevator, aiming for Will. The Guardian fired a shot above.

"Get down," he said, pushing Will and Joyce to the ground while Mike rolled away from them and dived down opposite The Guardian.

Joyce, however, didn't stay down. Instead, she reached across and took the .45 handgun from The Guardian's waistband and aimed it at the ceiling while The T-1000 continued to cut holes through the roof. Joyce fired at the ceiling a few times while The Guardian reloaded its shotgun.

Suddenly, one blade came crashing down right over Joyce, slicing her shoulder. She fell to the ground, grunting out in pain.

"Mom!" Will shouted, reaching for his mother.

Joyce shook her head, trying to tell Will that she was fine. Will pulled a magazine out of his backpack and handed it to his mom. Joyce took the magazine and reloaded the gun before she fired up at the ceiling again, nearly emptying the clip.

Suddenly, the elevator came to a stop and the doors opened.

"Go!" The Guardian yelled.

"Come on, Mike!" Will shouted, grabbing Mike's hand.

Joyce, Will and Mike left the elevator, while The Guardian was looking up for a sign of The T-1000, holding the shotgun at the ready. They ran through the parking lot when they saw an approaching police car coming toward them. The car screeched to halt when the driver saw the trio. Joyce pointed the handgun at the car.

"Out of the car!" she shouted before she fired a shot inches away from the driver's head. "Right now!"

The car door opened and the nervous-looking officer came out of it, holding up his hands in surrender. The Guardian came walking out of the elevator and stomped straight over to the car. The Guardian grabbed the officer by the uniform and shoved him into a pillar, knocking him unconscious. The four of them then got into the car just as The T-1000 pushed through the damaged roof of the elevator and jumped down into the elevator in its default form.

The T-1000 opened the elevator doors and started running just as The Guardian stepped on the gas pedal and started reversing out of the parking garage and toward the entrance. The T-1000 resorted to its default human appearance as it gave chase, running fast.

Joyce leaned out of the passenger window and fired the rest of her bullets at The T-1000 before she sat back down.

"I'm out!" she said.

The Guardian leaned out of the window and fired at The T-1000, causing it to stumble and slow down slightly.

"Come on," Joyce said impatiently to Will, who was reaching into his backpack for a magazine.

"Here!" Will shouted, handing Joyce the magazine.

Joyce loaded up the gun and leaned out the window again, firing once more at The T-1000. The Guardian, meanwhile, passed Will the shotgun through the windows.

"Reload," said The Guardian.

Joyce emptied another clip on The T-1000. Her bullets were just enough for the cyborg to stumble slightly as it continued chasing the retreating backward vehicle. When Joyce was out of bullets, she sat back down in her seat.

"Last one," Will shouted, handing her the last magazine.

Joyce took it and reloaded the gun. She leaned out the window again and fired at The T-1000. Just then, they reached the edge of the parking garage.

"Hang on!" said The Guardian.

The Guardian continued reversing and the ride became bouncy as it drove off the road and through the grassy knolls of the parking lot. The Guardian continued reversing, checking behind the car, while Joyce acted as a second set of eyes. The Guardian cut the wheel hard, causing the car to slew into a reverse 180, swapping ends with a screech. The Guardian punched it and the car accelerated forward.

Meanwhile, The T-1000 leapt through the air and landed on the trunk, its hands becoming like a metal crowbar that slammed down through the trunk lid. The T-1000's feet dragged on the pavement. The Guardian crashed the car through the gated entrance, speeding past the guard it had shot earlier, who was crawling back to his post.

The Guardian swerved to get the debris from the gate off the car before it sped down the next road. The T-1000, now fully on the car, started climbing closer to the back of the car. Will finally finished reloading the shotgun.

"Ready!" he shouted, passing the shotgun up to the Guardian.

When Will sat back down, suddenly the back window shattered as The T-1000 used its metal hand to break through it.

"Shit!" Mike yelled as he and Will dived for cover from the glass.

"Will!" Joyce shouted, reaching for her son as The T-1000 continued to try and get to him.

The Guardian calmly pointed the shotgun out the window and fired a shot at The T-1000, causing it to stumble again.

"Here, drive!" The Guardian shouted to Joyce as it leaned out of the window with the upper half of its body.

The Guardian fired a shot at The T-1000's arm it was using to balance itself, breaking it. He cocked the shotgun and aimed at the T-1000's chest and fired. The T-1000 went flying off the back of the car and rolled on the ground several times before it recovered and got back to its feet. By the time The T-1000 was on its feet, its adversaries had gotten too far away from it.

The Guardian got back into the car and took the wheel from Joyce. Will sat up in the backseat and realized part of the hand from The T-1000 was flopping around in the wind, still embedded into the back of the car. He picked up the metal and tossed it to the ground.

The T-1000 soon reached the discarded piece of metal, which dissolved to liquid when its source arrived. The liquid bonded with the rest of The T-1000, disappearing into the shoe before The T-1000 turned around to plan its next move.

The car sped down the roadway. The Guardian turned off the patrol lights and headlights as it drove, enhancing its vision with its scanners.

"Can you even see anything?" Will asked.

"I see everything," The Guardian replied.

"Cool," said Will quietly. He looked at his mother properly for the first time since they got her out. He was so relieved to see her, but she almost looked annoyed to see him.

"Are you all right?" Joyce demanded.

"Yeah," said Will absently.

"Come here," Joyce said.

Joyce pulled Will into a brief hug that quickly turned into a search of

his body for any sign of broken glass. Will huffed in annoyance and broke the embrace.

"I said I was okay!" he said indignantly.

"Will, it was stupid of you to go there," Joyce said. "Goddamn it, you have to be smarter than that. What were you thinking? You cannot risk yourself, even for me, do you understand? You're too important! Do you understand?"

Joyce didn't wait for an answer and turned around in her seat.

"I had to get you out of that place," Will said, sounding close to tears. "I'm sorry."

"I don't need your help, I can take care of myself," Joyce said coldly.

Will started to cry lightly. He turned away from Mike, too ashamed to look at his best friend while in this state. The Guardian, however, was not used to subtly and noticed Will's tears.

"What's wrong with your eyes?" it asked.

"Nothing," Will said in a shaky voice.

"So what's your story?" Joyce asked, staring at The Guardian with a wary once-over.

Meanwhile, Mike looked over at Will. Slowly, Mike reached across and took Will's hands in his own. Will startled slightly and looked at Mike, who was looking back at him with such tenderness in his eyes. Will relaxed slightly and smiled at Mike. Mike smiled back as he curled his and Will's fingers together and scooted closer to Will. Will lay his head down on Mike's shoulder and closed his eyes, letting the exhaustion take over him.

Notes for the Chapter:

My apologies for not updating this story yesterday as promised! Sadly, my Mom's Pomeranian Mu, who was my favorite of her two poms, passed away suddenly yesterday so I was pretty moody all day

and forgot about updating this story until about 11:45 last night. By then I was in no mood to edit the story so I figured I'd handle it once I got into work; I had forgotten this chapter was so long, which is why it's taken till now to post it!

Hope you enjoy this chapter! And as promised there will be another new chapter published tomorrow, so yay for two days in a row of updates!

12. Regrouping

Summary for the Chapter:

After escaping from Pescadero Hospital, Joyce, The Guardian, Mike and Will regroup with the rest of their family and friends in the desert. Joyce learns about Scott Clarke, the man who will be responsible for the creation of Skynet and, ultimately, the war.

The Guardian kept driving the police car for quite some time. To their luck, there was hardly any traffic on the roads they took to go wherever they were going and nobody spared them a second glance when they drove by.

"So, this other Terminator..." Joyce started.

"A T-1000," said The Guardian.

"Right, this T-1000, what happens when you shoot it?"

"Ballistic penetration shocks it, but only for a few seconds."

Joyce thought about it for a moment.

"Can it be destroyed?"

"Unknown," said The Guardian. "The T-1000 is an advanced prototype. Only Skynet itself would have information about its full abilities and whether it can be destroyed."

They rode along in silence for a few seconds before Joyce saw something up ahead and gestured to it.

"Pull in up here," Joyce said. "We need to ditch this car."

"Affirmative," said The Guardian.

The Guardian pulled the car into the parking lot. It was a rundown gas station with a buzzing neon sign and no sign of anyone around. The Guardian pulled the car up to the garage. The Guardian got out

of the car with Will and the two of them lifted the garage up, breaking the lock on it. Joyce drove the car into the garage and The Guardian roughly grabbed Will, pulling him into the garage.

"Hey!" Will exclaimed. "Watch it, dipshit!"

Once they had gotten a sense of their surroundings, The Guardian went into the office to retrieve some first aid equipment. He motioned for Joyce to sit down and he went to work on the wound Joyce had received in the elevator. The Guardian carefully examined it and worked on healing it.

Joyce winced every few seconds as she felt the pain shoot through her shoulder. She never in a million years would've dreamed that a Terminator would be treating her wounds. She wasn't sure if she was grateful or annoyed by it.

"Listen," Will said, coming around to the table where The Guardian was working on Joyce, holding a fresh set of towels. "You know what you're doing?"

"I have detailed files on human anatomy," said The Guardian.

"I'll bet," Joyce said, shutting her eyes to try and shut out the pain. "Makes you a more efficient killer, right?"

"Correct."

The Guardian soon finished treating Joyce's wound and bandaging it. He then took off his leather jacket and the shirt underneath so that Joyce could remove the bullets it had taken during the two fights with The T-1000 earlier that day. While Joyce was removing the bullets, Will and Mike held up the jacket, seeing the bullet holes spread throughout the back of the jacket.

"Jesus," said Mike. "He can sure take a lot of heat."

"Does it hurt when you get shot?" Will asked The Guardian.

"I sense injuries," said The Guardian. "The data could be called pain."

"Will, help me with the light," Joyce instructed in a quiet voice.

Will walked over and adjusted the light, shining it closer to some of the bullet holes in The Guardian's skin.

"Will these heal up?" Joyce asked The Guardian.

"Yes."

"Good," said Joyce shortly. "If you can't pass for human, you're not much good to us."

Joyce continued to concentrate on removing the slugs while Will and Mike both watched with bated interest.

"How long do you live? I mean, last, whatever?" Will asked.

"A hundred and twenty years on my existing power cell," said The Guardian.

"Can you learn stuff that you haven't been programmed with so you could be...you know, more human? And not such a dork all the time?"

"My CPU is a neural-net processor; a learning computer. But Skynet presets the switch to read-only when we're set out alone."

"It doesn't want you doing too much thinking, huh?"

"No."

A little while later, Will and Mike had piled into the police car, trying their best to get comfortable and get some sleep. It was difficult for the two of them to rest comfortably in such a small car. Eventually, Mike leaned back in the passenger seat while Will lay across the backseat. It wasn't ideal, but they would be comfortable enough to fall asleep for a couple of hours before they got back on the road.

They sat in silence together for a while, both of them having trouble going to sleep with their minds racing.

"Hey Mike?" Will asked suddenly.

"Yeah?"

"You're not mad at me, are you?"

"Why would you ask that?"

"I don't know. It's just...I didn't want you to find out about the future like this. I knew I was gonna have to tell you eventually, but I wanted our relationship to not be predetermined, you know? I wanted us to be together naturally."

Mike sat up slightly so he could look at Will properly. He gave Will one of his trademark smiles.

"Hey, I know it wasn't ideal, Will, but you don't have anything to worry about. I've felt this way about you for a long time. I was just scared to admit it because I thought you would hate me."

"I would never hate you, Mike!" Will interrupted. "I could never hate you."

Mike's grin grew.

"I'm glad for that. Because if I'm being honest with you, Will: Knowing that we'll be together in the future just makes me love you even more than I already do."

"You love me?" Will asked, feeling slightly taken aback.

Mike nodded.

"I do, Will. I love you. I love you with all of my heart. I've known it for a long time now, but I'm ready to say it now."

"I love you, too, Mike," Will said. "I know it's not gonna be easy and we have a long road ahead of us. But as long as I get to walk that road with you, I know that we're gonna be okay. That I'm gonna be okay."

"I'm glad to hear you say that, Will. Cause I feel the exact same way."

At that, Mike struggled to stifle a yawn.

"Okay, I guess that means we really should try and get some sleep," Will said, giggling softly.

"I love hearing your laugh," Mike said.

Will blushed profusely at that.

"Shut up, Mike," he said, though there was no bite in his tone.

"Oh please, Will, you know you love it."

"Yeah, I do," Will said, sighing dramatically to himself. "And I'm an idiot."

"Don't talk about yourself that way, baby. You're perfect just the way you are."

"Mike if you don't quit flirting with me, I'm never gonna be able to fall asleep!"

"Oh, all right," Mike said. "But can I at least hold your hand while I try to go to sleep? Knowing you're here with me and safe will help me fall asleep."

"All right, you nut," Will said, lifting the hand closest to Mike and grabbing on to his hand.

Mike grabbed Will's hands and laced their fingers together. In moments, the two of them drifted off to sleep, their held hands not moving at all as they slept.

The Guardian kept watch outside all night long, standing in place with its shotgun held over its shoulder as it watched for a sign of any intruders. The night passed without incident. While Will, Mike and Joyce woke up and got ready to leave, The Guardian went out into the parking lot of the abandoned gas station and saw a station wagon sitting in the lot. The Guardian approached the station wagon and gave it a quick look over with its scanners, determining that the car was functional and would suit their needs.

Will and Mike joined The Guardian just as it punched through the

window of the driver's side of the car, shattering the glass. It then reached inside and unlocked the door before sitting down inside the car while Will sat down in the passenger side after The Guardian unlocked the door for him. The Guardian then smashed the cowl around a steering column with one blow from the palm of his hand. When it shattered, he stripped it away with a single move and then turned the stub of the lock-mechanism with his fingertips, starting the vehicle.

The car was running by the time Will flipped down the sun visor, where a set of keys fell out and into Will's waiting grasp. Will turned around and glanced at Mike, who had crawled into the backseat. They shared a smile before Will held up the keys in front of The Guardian.

"Are we learning yet?" Will asked in a teasing tone.

Joyce came out of the gas station, putting on a mechanic's coverall she found inside that was fairly clean. The Guardian pulled up the station wagon next to Joyce, who was rubbing her eyes.

"We need to get as far away from the city as possible," said The Guardian.

Joyce nodded as she opened the back door to get into the car.

"Just head south," she instructed.

The Guardian drove off as soon as Joyce was seated. When they were on the empty road, he drove the car fast, passing around several cars that weren't going fast enough for its liking. Joyce noticed how much speed The Guardian was using.

"Keep it under 65," she said. "We don't wanna be pulled over."

"Affirmative," said The Guardian.

"No, no, no," said Will, sounding both annoyed and amused at the same time. "You gotta listen to the way people talk. You don't say 'affirmative' or some shit like that. You say...'no problemo.'"

The Guardian nodded, filing away the information into its

databanks.

"And if someone comes off to you with an attitude, you say 'eat me.' And if you wanna shine them on, it's 'Hasta la vista, baby.'"

"Hasta la vista, baby?" The Guardian repeated.

"Yeah, or 'later, asshole.' And if someone gets upset, you say 'chill out' or you can do combinations."

"Chill out....asshole," said The Guardian.

"That's great! See, you're getting it," Will said excitedly.

"No problemo."

A short time later, steam was starting to rise from the hood of the station wagon. Luckily, there was a gas station nearby, so The Guardian pulled the car into the parking lot and up to one of the pumps. Will and Mike went into the gas station to get food for everyone while The Guardian refilled the car's tank with cash that Will had in his backpack. Joyce, meanwhile, sat in the car daydreaming to herself, largely ignoring everything around her. She wordlessly accepted the food Will brought to her and she ate in silence.

The Guardian was pouring fresh oil into the station wagon while the trio ate. When he was finished, Will offered his fries to Joyce, who ignored him, while Mike took the fries from Will with a grin. Will got out of the car and walked around to the front where The Guardian was pouring the oil.

"Need any help?" Will asked.

"No," replied The Guardian.

Just then, they were both distracted by the sound of two kids playing with water guns that they were miming shooting each other with.

"I got you!" the first kid yelled.

"No you didn't, I got you!" the second kid yelled.

"No way! I got you!" shouted the first kid.

Will and The Guardian watched the two kids roll around in the dirt, still arguing about who won the pretend gun fight. Joyce was alerted by the sounds of the kids and stood up, watching the two kids with a sad look on her face. Will sighed, solemn, looking up at the cyborg.

"We're not gonna make it, are we? People, I mean."

"It's in your nature to destroy yourselves," replied The Guardian.

"Yeah, it's a major drag," said Mike, who was throwing away the last of the food.

Joyce, however, was ignoring all of this. It looked like a thought had just occurred to her. She looked up at The Guardian.

"I need to know how Skynet gets built," she said. "Who's responsible?"

"The man most directly responsible is a man named Scott Clarke," The Guardian said, shoving the hood of the car closed before the four of them started to get back into the car.

"Who is that?" Joyce asked.

"He's the director of special projects at Cyberdyne Systems Corporation."

"Why him?"

The Guardian started up the car and pulled out of the gas station, heading back down the road.

"In a few years, he creates a revolutionary type of microprocessor."

"Go on," Joyce said impatiently. "Then what?"

"In thirteen years, Cyberdyne will become the largest supplier of military computer systems," The Guardian explained. "All stealth bombers are upgraded with Cyberdyne computers, becoming fully unmanned. Afterward, they fly with a perfect operational record. The Skynet Funding Bill is passed. The system goes online August 4,

2032. Human decisions are removed from strategic defense. Skynet begins to learn at a geometric rate. It becomes self-aware at 2:14 a.m. Eastern time, August 29th. In a panic, they try to pull the plug."

"Skynet fights back," Joyce deduced.

"Yes. It launches its missiles against the targets in Russia."

"Why attack Russia?" asked Mike.

"Because Skynet knows that the Russian counterattack will eliminate its enemies over here."

"Jesus," said Joyce.

"By taking out the two biggest superpowers in the world, the rest of the population doesn't stand a chance," Will observed.

"Correct," said The Guardian.

There was a beat before Joyce spoke.

"How much do you know about Clarke?"

The Guardian glanced at Joyce before it looked back to the road ahead.

"I have detailed files," he said.

"I want to know everything," Joyce said. "What he looks like. Where he lives. Everything."

The Guardian continued driving south for several hours, following Joyce's instructions to get to their location. They ended up close to the Mexican border. Joyce had The Guardian pull into an area in the desert that appeared to be abandoned. Although there were several cars and trailers in the area, nobody seemed to be occupying them. Will had thought to ask his mother if she was mistaken, but decided to hold his tongue in fear of getting another lecture from Joyce.

When The Guardian brought the car to a stop and turned it off. Joyce

opened the passenger door, turning to the others before she got out.

"Wait in the car," Joyce instructed.

She stepped out of the car, looking around for a sign of life that she seemed to know was there. Joyce kept her hand on the handgun she had gotten from The Guardian the night before; it was tucked into the back of her pants and she was ready to draw it at a moment's notice. After looking around for a few moments, Joyce called out to the abandoned vehicles.

"Enrique!" she shouted. "Estás aquí?"

There was no response, but Joyce tried again.

"Jim?"

Will and Mike both looked up at the sound of Jim's name. They heard a gun cock nearby and saw Joyce whip around, yanking the gun from her waistband and pointing it toward the sound. The Guardian stood up from the car, aiming its shotgun at the sound, while Will and Mike hopped out of the back seat, glancing around for the source of the sound.

Joyce saw the man she had been calling out to. He had an amused expression on his face.

"You're pretty jumpy, Byers," Enrique said.

"Et tu," said Joyce, holding up a hand toward The Guardian, signaling for him to lower his weapon. Joyce lowered her own weapon as Enrique started walking toward her. "Es bueno verte hijo de puta."

Enrique laughed as he hurried forward and pulled Joyce into a hug.

"It's good to see you, too, Byers," Enrique said. "Your husband hasn't shut up about you since he got here with all those refugees."

Enrique turned his head and shouted toward one of the buses.

"Jimbo! Your family is here!"

Will and Mike watched as Jim, Jonathan and El came out of one of the abandoned buses, all of them looking relieved to see Joyce, Will and Mike. The rest of their friends also came out of hiding spots in the buses and trailers and they all headed to greet the newcomers.

"You guys okay?" Dustin demanded when he reached Mike and Will, pulling them both into a hug.

"We're good, Dustin," said Will.

"Did you really get chased by a cop?" asked Lucas.

"It wasn't a cop," said Mike. "It was..." he hesitated.

"I know, your Dad kinda explained everything to us," said Lucas, nodding at Will.

"Joyce!" Jim exclaimed when he reached his wife, pulling her into a tight hug. "Jesus, honey, are you all right?"

"I'm fine," Joyce replied, looking a little stiff. "Sorry, Jim. I haven't had any regular human contact in a while that didn't involve me getting hit."

"Who hit you?" Jim demanded. "I'll kick their ass!"

"You don't have to worry about it, Dad," said Will. "Our friend here took care of him," he said, gesturing to The Guardian.

"So is that him?" Dustin asked. "Is that the Terminator?"

Will nodded.

"He's assigned to protect all of us," Will said. "Mike and I reprogrammed him in the future and I sent him back through time to protect us."

"Well he'd better not stray from that," said El, pulling Will into a hug. "Otherwise I think Mom and Dad might blow him up."

"He'll be fine," said Will. "I'm actually trying to get him to behave more like a human."

"And how's that going?" asked Max.

"About as good as you'd expect," Mike said in an amused tone, earning him a slap on the arm from Will. "Sorry, babe," Mike said apologetically.

"Babe?" asked Dustin, looking confused. "Wait, are you guys...?"

Mike and Will nodded, both of them blushing profusely.

"Well, it's about damn time!" said El, sounding slightly annoyed but also highly amused.

"About time?" Mike asked. "What do you mean?"

"She means it's about time you guys got your heads out of your asses and started dating," said Max, rolling her eyes. "It was plain to anyone with eyes that you guys had feelings for each other."

"It wasn't plain to me," said Lucas, raising his hand.

"Well, that's cause you're usually slow on the uptake," said Max, giving Lucas a kiss on the cheek. "But I love you anyway."

While the kids were catching up, Joyce turned to Enrique, who had been joined by his family, who lived in this abandoned camp.

"You know, Joyce, you're getting famous," Enrique said. "All over the goddamn TV."

"Tends to happen when you escape custody," said Joyce, grinning at Enrique.

"I'm surprised the cops haven't come looking for us out here," Jim said. "It's not exactly a secret that we have connections down south."

"They'll probably figure that out real quick," said Joyce. "I came for my stuff," she said to Enrique. "And to keep all of these people safe until we can regroup with them. I need clothes, food and at least one of your trucks."

"Hey, how about the fillings out of my fucking teeth while you're at

it?" Enrique asked, grinning slightly.

"Now, Enrique," Joyce said impatiently. She turned to Jim and The Guardian. "You two: you're on weapons detail. Jim, play nicely."

Jim sighed briefly before he gestured for The Guardian to follow him to the cache of weapons Joyce had hidden in the camp. Meanwhile, Joyce walked over to Will, where he was still chatting with the others.

"Will, we're gonna have to get all your friends up to speed on weapons training," Joyce said. "I need you to guide your younger friends and Jonathan is gonna train your older friends."

"Don't you think you'd be a better trainer than me, Mom?" Jonathan asked, having overheard Joyce while he was talking with Nancy, Steve and Robin.

"You're the future leader of the Resistance, Jonathan," said Joyce. "You need to get used to leading."

For the rest of the day, Jonathan and Will both started weapons training all of their friends, their future lieutenants, in order to prepare them for a confrontation with The T-1000. Jim and The Guardian gathered up the weapons that they would use to fight The T-1000 and loaded them into one of Enrique's trucks, which The Guardian worked to repair and get running again. All of the kids' parents, apart from Jim and Joyce, had also joined the fray, all of them watching with bemusement as their children learned to handle guns.

Meanwhile, Joyce was cleaning her personal cache of weapons. She had spent the years since the first Terminator was defeated carefully preparing herself for the appearance of another Terminator. Her cache of weapons included an AR-15, an assault shotgun, a desert eagle handgun and a Bowie knife. She had changed into some athletic black clothing and boots before she went about cleaning her weapons.

By dusk that evening, Jonathan and Will had paused the weapons training. All of their friends had gotten the basic hang of weapons

usage; each of them had picked up on the skills with weapons that their future selves favored, a fact pointed out to them by The Guardian, who had helped guide the kids with the training once the truck was repaired.

Joyce sat alone at a table, carving into it with her knife. When she was finished she looked over at her sons, who were chatting and laughing with their friends, and her husband, who was keeping an eye on The Guardian as if prepared to fight the cyborg at any given moment. Joyce hadn't slept in twenty-four hours and she felt as if she were carrying the weight of the world on her shoulders. She dropped her head down to the table, still watching her sons and their friends before she closed her eyes.

Joyce found herself near a playground in a park. It was crowded with children playing on swings, slides and a jungle gym. The grass was vibrant green and the sun was shining warmly on all the kids and parents. Joyce, with her hair pulled back into a ponytail and her being dressed in military style clothing, stood out. She was an outsider among everyone playing in the park. She walked toward a chain-link fence, staring through it at the parents playing with their kids.

One of the young mothers walked her small son by the hands. She was wearing a pink waitress uniform. She turned so she was facing Joyce and Joyce's breath hitched when she realized she was looking at herself. The other Joyce was beautiful and radiant. It was Joyce from another life, one uncontaminated by the dark future.

Grim-faced Joyce pressed against the fence. She started yelling at everyone in the park, telling them to run and take shelter. But, no words were coming out of her mouth. No matter how hard she tried to shout, nothing came out. She grabbed the fence in frustration and started shaking it. Joyce was screaming soundlessly, trying in vain to get the attention of someone, anyone on the playground. Waitress Joyce glanced behind at Joyce, her smile disappearing as she stared at Joyce. Then she looked back at her son and she laughed, as if the Joyce she saw at the fence was a shadow.

Suddenly, the sky exploded. The children ignited like match heads. Joyce was also burning, screaming loudly as she flinched from the explosion.

Everything was frozen in place and overexposed. The blast wave hit, devouring the cowering mothers and children. The entire area surrounding the park was consumed in the blast wave; nothing living could survive it. Joyce's screams merged with the howl of the wind as the shockwave ripped into her, blasting her apart.

Joyce woke with a start, her entire body flinching. She was bathed in sweat as she sat up over the table. Every muscle was shaking and she was gasping for air. The kids were all still chatting and laughing with each other. It's only been about 15 minutes since Joyce had fallen asleep.

When Joyce got control back of her breathing, she looked down at the words she had carved on the table. The words "NO FATE" stared back at her. Something changed in Joyce's eyes as she stared at those words. She grabbed the knife and slammed it down into the table top, embedding it deeply in the words. Then she got up suddenly and went into the nearest trailer.

Some time later, after most of the kids had gone to bed except for Will, Mike, Jonathan and El, Joyce came stalking out of the trailer, dressed ready to kill. She walked across the compound with grim purpose. Her face was an impassive mask; she had become a Terminator.

Will had just finished loading up the truck with Mike when he looked up in time to see Joyce throw a rifle into the backseat of the stolen station wagon, jump in and start it. Joyce slammed the car into gear. Enrique came running over to the others.

"She said you guys should go south in the morning," he explained. "Just like you planned. She'll meet you tomorrow night."

But Will didn't listen, instead he was running to catch up to Joyce.

"Mom!" Will shouted as he ran toward the car. "Mom, wait! Mom!"

Joyce couldn't hear his words as she sped out of the compound. She looked in the rear-view mirror and saw Will just before she took off, but she didn't slow down.

When Joyce had driven off, Will turned and ran back toward the others.

"Did she say anything to you, Dad?" Will demanded.

"No, she didn't," said Jim. "She must be going to go and do something."

"Yeah, I guess," Will said, distracted.

"Will?" said Mike, looking concerned.

"I'm just gonna..." Will said, walking off toward the table where he had seen Joyce fall asleep. Mike and The Guardian followed Will, while Jim turned to Jonathan and El, seeing if they had any answers. When Jonathan and El shrugged, Jim led them over to Will, Mike and The Guardian, who had gathered at the table.

Joyce's knife was still embedded into the table. Will grabbed the knife and yanked it out of the table so he could read what was carved.

"No fate?" Will said to himself. Then he looked up at the others. "No fate but what we make.' Dad, you told her this, didn't you?"

"Yeah I did," said Jim.

"I made you memorize in the future as a message to give to her."

"How did the message go?" El asked, frowning.

Jim cleared his throat.

"The whole thing goes: 'The future is not set. There is no fate but what we make for ourselves.'" Jim said.

"But what does that mean?" Jonathan asked.

"Is it something about the future?" asked Mike.

"She intends to change the future," The Guardian deduced.

"Yeah, I guess," said Will, thinking hard. Then, his eyes widened as it

hit him. "Oh shit!"

"What?" said Mike. "What's wrong?"

"Clarke," said The Guardian.

Will nodded.

"Yeah," he said. "It's gotta be. Scott Clarke! She's gonna blow him away!"

"Your Mom wouldn't do that, kiddo," Jim said, trying to sound convincing.

"Dad, she tried to blow up a computer factory," said Jonathan in a deadpan voice.

"Yeah, but she wouldn't kill someone," said Jim.

"Wouldn't she?" said Will. "She has every reason to try and go after Clarke and change the future."

"Will's right," said El. "Mom would do anything to prevent 3 billion people from being slaughtered on Judgement Day."

"Then we've gotta stop her," said Mike. "Will, what should we do?"

"I'll go and stop her," Will said determinedly. "Dad, do you want to come with?"

"I probably should," Jim said, nodding. "She might need a lot of talking down." He turned to The Guardian. "Do you know where this Scott Clarke lives?"

"Yes," said The Guardian. "I have detailed files on Clarke."

"Then you're coming with us," said Jim.

"I want to go too," said Jonathan. "We gotta stop her."

"I'm going too," said El.

Jim nodded at all the kids.

"It could take all of us to talk her down."

Will turned to Mike.

"Mike, I need you to stay here with the others," Will said.

"Will..." Mike started to protest but Will cut him off.

"I'm gonna be okay, I promise," Will said. "But I need to know you're safe and you will be if you stay here. I'll be okay with Dad, Jonathan and El, and him. Please promise me you'll stay here with everyone."

Mike nodded before he pulled Will into a hug.

"Just be careful, Will, please," Mike implored. "I love you."

"I love you, too," Will said, breaking the hug. He turned to the others. "Let's go," he said in a firm tone.

The four of them piled into the truck they had loaded up with weapons. Jim was in the driver's seat while The Guardian sat in the passenger seat, navigating to Scott Clarke's home. The three kids sat in the back seat, all of them lost in their own thoughts.

When they reached a highway that led into Los Angeles, The Guardian spoke up about their mission.

"This is tactically dangerous," he said.

"We have to risk it," Will said impatiently.

"The T-1000 has the same files that I do. It could anticipate this move."

"I don't care, we have to stop her," said Will.

"Killing Clarke might actually prevent the war."

"I don't care!" Will shouted. "There's gotta be another way we can try and prevent the war. Besides, haven't you learned anything? Haven't you figured out why you can't kill people?"

The Guardian shrugged, still stumped at Will's request not to kill

anyone.

Notes for the Chapter:

Hawkins Friday Nights, y'all!

Hope you all had a great week and will have a relaxing weekend! Here is a new chapter for you to read and enjoy until the next update on Monday. I feel only slightly bad about leaving you on a cliffhanger, though if you've seen Terminator 2, you know what comes next.

I'm a little sad there are only two more chapters left after this! This story has been in my head for about a year now and I'm so glad I'm getting to share it with all of you.

Until Monday!

13. Changing the Future

Summary for the Chapter:

Joyce Byers goes after Scott Clarke, the director of Special Projects at Cyberdyne Systems, whose work will lead to the creation of Skynet. But when Joyce can't bring herself to harm another person, the group devises a plan to prevent the future war from happening at all.

The house was high-tech and luxurious. Scott Clarke sat in his study, which was lit bluish with the glow of his computer monitors. He was at the terminal working.

Outside his home, he didn't notice a dark figure moving close to the house. Joyce Byers raised her rifle and began screwing the long heavy cylinder of a sound-suppressor onto the end of the barrel.

When the silencer was in place, Joyce eased back the bolt and then slipped it forward, chambering a round. Then she lay down on the embankment. Joyce's hand slipped knowingly to the trigger. Her expression was cold and impassive. She looked through the scope toward the man in the house.

Joyce aimed the gun at Clarke, a red dot appearing on his back. She took several breaths as she held the rifle. Joyce adjusted her position, muttering "the head" to herself as she slowly raised the rifle's aim. The laser dot jiggled on the back of Clarke's neck and then rose, centering on the back of his skull.

Inside the house, Clarke's son Danny was ignoring his mother's request to go and get ready for bed. Instead, Danny was using his remote control to drive his toy truck up and down the halls of the house, his mind quickly coming up with a mischievous ploy to get his Dad's attention. When he reached his father's study, Danny slowed down the truck and his walking to sneak up on his Dad.

When he saw the right moment, Danny raised his remote control and made the toy truck rush over to his father. The truck hit Clarke in the

leg and he grunted slightly.

"Danny!" Scott Clarke said in an exasperated tone.

Clarke was lucky that he ducked down to see the truck because at the exact moment he did, there was a loud pop and his computer screen was blown out. Clarke jumped in shock, his eyes darting behind him to see what had happened. There was a second pop as another bullet came flying in through the back window.

Instinctively, Clarke dived to the carpet just as several rounds of fire came blasting through the window, tearing apart the desk and computer and blowing his keyboard into shrapnel.

With the monitor blown out, Joyce couldn't see Clarke anymore. She put round after round into the heavy desk.

Scared out of his mind, Clarke had his face jammed up against the carpet. He saw Danny nearby, calling out to him.

"Danny, go! Go! Run!"

In the hall, Clarke's wife Tarissa rounded the corner. She saw Danny standing there helpless outside of Scott's study. She grabbed her son and held him while she looked over to her husband, seeing Clarke on the floor amid the splinters and shrapnel of the continuing fusillade.

"Scott!" Tarissa shouted. "Oh my god!"

"Stay back, stay back!" Clarke yelled.

Joyce's rifle emptied with a final clack. She threw the gun to the ground and drew out her .45 smoothly from a shoulder base. She started walking toward the house, snapping back the slide on the pistol, chambering a round. She was in a fast, purposeful walk, keeping her eyes fixed on her target.

"Tarissa, just take Danny and run!" Clarke ordered his wife. "Run!"

Tarissa did as instructed.

"Oh Jesus, Scott!" she moaned as she ran off.

Clarke glanced around from his desk and saw the figure walking with determination toward him. He quickly hid behind the desk again, trying to figure out what to do next. He heard some glass crunch and he immediately stood up from his hiding spot and took off at a run.

Bang!

Clarke flinched as he heard the first shot. It was followed closely by a second one that also missed him. The third shot hit him in the shoulder, blood spewing out of his back from where the bullet left his body. Clarke fell to the ground, screaming out in pain.

"Daddy!" Danny shouted, running into the living room, where his father was on the ground in pain.

"Danny! Danny!" Tarissa shouted, chasing her son into the living room.

"Nobody fucking move!" Joyce shouted, pointing the gun at the family.

"Don't hurt my Daddy!" Danny begged, using his whole body as a shield over his father.

"Get on the floor, bitch," Joyce snarled at Tarissa. "Fucking down now!"

"Oh!" Tarissa screamed as she obeyed and dropped down to the ground.

Joyce turned her attention to Clarke and the son.

"Get out of the way!" Joyce ordered.

"Don't hurt him!" Danny yelled.

Clarke pushed his son off of him and into his wife's arms. He looked up, through his pain and incomprehension at what was happening. He stared at his attacker.

"Just...let the boy go," he begged.

"Shut up!" Joyce shouted. "Shut up, shut up, shut up! It's all your fault! Motherfucker, it's all your fault!"

"What?" Clarke asked, staring at his attacker with a confused look.

"I'm not gonna let you do it," Joyce said under her breath, her hands still on the gun.

Joyce psyched herself to pull the trigger. Suddenly she realized it was much harder doing it face-to-face instead of just picturing it in her mind. The gun started to tremble as Joyce started to cry, realizing she was becoming what she hated: a killing machine.

All the breath and energy seemed to snap out of Joyce right away. She weakly raised her other hand in a strange gesture to Clarke, as if silently telling him to stay where he was and not to move. She gently shushed Clarke and his family as she slowly backed away from them, panting and sobbing to herself. She reached a wall and slumped against it, sliding down to her knees. The gun fell limply from her fingers.

Outside, there was the sound of a car coming to an abrupt halt followed by several footsteps approaching the house. The Clarke family all held on to each other, staring at the woman who had tried to kill Clarke.

"Shit we're too late!" Will shouted as he reached a side door, which The Guardian calmly opened, walking into the room, followed by Jonathan, El and Jim.

Will hurried over to his mother and knelt down next to her.

"Check them!" Will ordered The Guardian.

He turned his attention to his mother, who seemed like she was in a trance. Joyce was still crying to herself as Will put his hands on her shoulders.

"Mom, are you okay?" Will demanded as his fathers and siblings knelt down next to him and his mother.

"I....I almost...." Joyce said, unable to get the words out. She looked at

Will, as if seeing him for the first time and then noticed the rest of her family. "You came here to stop me?" she asked in a tone barely louder than a whisper.

"Yeah, we did," Will said quietly.

Joyce reached out to Will and took his shoulders suddenly, surprising him and drawing him to her. She hugged him and a great sob welled up deep inside her, from a spring she had thought long dry. She hugged Will fiercely as the sobs wracked her. Within moments, El, Jonathan and Jim and joined the hug and the five of them held each other tightly.

"It's okay," El whispered.

"You're gonna be okay, Mom," added Jonathan.

"Everything's fine now," said Jim.

"We'll figure it out," Will said, breaking the hug with his mother.

"I love you, Will," Joyce said. "I always have."

"I know, Mom, I know," Will said before he hugged his mother again.

The Guardian, meanwhile, was examining Clarke's gunshot wound. It scanned the wound and made a diagnosis.

"Clean penetration," The Guardian observed. "No shattered bone. Here," he said, taking Tarissa's hand and placing it over the blood-soaked wound. "Compression should stop the bleeding."

Will disengaged from Joyce and stood up to walk over to The Guardian. Jim took over hugging Joyce, who seemed to give up looking tough and held onto her husband tightly. Jonathan and El stayed with their parents while Will reached The Guardian.

"Who are you people?" Clarke asked.

Will took out a biker's knife and handed it to The Guardian.

"Show him," he instructed.

The Guardian took the knife and took off his jacket to reveal bare arms. Will bent down to Danny and gave him a warm smile.

"Danny, I want you to come with me, okay?" he said. "Show me your room."

Will held out his hand and Danny took it before leading Will out of the room and toward his bedroom. Before leaving the living room, Will nodded at The Guardian and made sure Danny wouldn't see what was about to happen.

The Guardian made a deep cut on its left arm, near the elbow. Clarke and Tarissa started squealing at the sight of The Guardian cutting into its own arm. In one smooth motion, The Guardian cut all the way around his arm. With a second cut, he split the skin from elbow to wrist. He tossed the knife to the ground and grasped the skin, stripping it off his forearm like a surgeon rips off a rubber glove.

Clarke and his wife both screamed out when the human arm was torn off. It came off with a sucking rip, leaving a bloody skeleton. But the skeleton was made of bright metal and was laced with hydraulic actuators. The fingers were as finely crafted as watch parts and they flexed into a fist and extended. The Guardian held it up, palm out, in almost the exact position of the one in the vault at Cyberdyne.

Clarke's eyes widened in shock as he realized what he was seeing. His wife was still screaming, but Clarke didn't hear her.

"Oh my god," Clarke whispered under his breath.

"Now listen to me very carefully," said The Guardian.

Over the next while, The Guardian explained the history of everything to come. The entourage eventually moved to the kitchen, where The Guardian patched up Clarke with supplies from the first aid kit. The Guardian's exposed arm was now covered again with the leather jacket and the hand covered by a glove, so The Guardian looked as human as ever. Clarke listened as The Guardian laid it all down: Skynet, Judgement Day, the history of all things to come. It's not every day you find out you're responsible for three billion deaths. Clarke took it pretty well.

The Guardian finished speaking, ending its tale with its final movements in 2050 before being sent back to 2015.

"I feel like I'm gonna throw up," Clarke said.

He looked around at the Byers family, clutching the table like he was about to blow away. His face, his posture, his ragged voice expressed soul-wrenching terror.

"You're judging me on things that I haven't even done yet," he said. "How were we supposed to know?"

From behind him, Joyce spoke from the shadows. Clarke turned to find her looking right at him, smoking a cigarette.

"Yeah, right," Joyce said in a dark voice. "How are you supposed to know? Fucking men like you built the hydrogen bomb. Men like you thought it up. You think you're so creative. You don't know what it's really like to create something; to create a life; to feel it growing inside you. All you know how to create is death and destruction..."

"Mom," Will said in an exasperated voice, but Joyce kept going, so Will shouted. "MOM!"

Joyce stopped speaking, glaring at her youngest son.

"We have to be a little more constructive here, okay?" Will said. "We still have to stop this from happening, don't we?"

"But I thought...aren't we changing things?" Tarissa asked. "I mean, right now? Changing the way it goes?"

"That's right," Clarke said, seizing on his wife's point. "There's no way I'm going to finish the new processor now. Forget it. I'm out of it. I'm quitting Cyberdyne tomorrow. I'll sell real estate, do something else."

"That's not good enough," Joyce said coldly.

"Nobody can follow your work," Jim said.

"All right, yeah," Clarke said. "We have to destroy the stuff at the lab, the files, disk drive, everything. And everything I have here."

Everything! I don't care."

Suddenly, Clarke looked up at The Guardian.

"The chip!" he exclaimed. "Do you know about the chip?"

"What chip?" Joyce demanded.

"They have it in a vault at Cyberdyne. It's gotta be from the other one like you," Clarke said, gesturing to The Guardian.

"The CPU from the first Terminator," said The Guardian.

"Son of a bitch, I knew it!" Joyce snarled, hopping down from the counter and starting to pace the kitchen. "Those lying motherfuckers!"

"They told us not to ask where they got it," Clarke said, ignoring Joyce. "I thought...Japan...hell, I don't know. I didn't want to know. It was scary stuff, radically advanced. It was shattered, didn't work. But it gave us ideas. It took us in new directions, things we would never..."

Clarke cut himself off as he found himself getting excited over a project he knew was responsible for the end of the world.

"All my work was based on it," he said calmly.

"It must be destroyed," said The Guardian.

"So what do we do?" asked El.

"We gotta go back for the others," Jonathan said. "We'll need a plan if we're going to stop all of this from happening and stopping The T-1000 in the process."

"You're right," said Will, nodding. "We'll have to come up with a plan and plan for everything to go wrong."

"Can you get us in there, past security?" Joyce asked.

"I think so, yeah," Clarke said. "When?"

The Guardian stood up from the table, staring at Clarke with a determined expression on its face.

"Now?" Clarke asked.

"It's now or never, Mr. Clarke," said Jim. "Your wife and kids are not safe here, either. We'll get them moved to a hidden spot where they can't be found with some friends of ours."

"Are you sure?" Tarissa demanded. "How can you be sure it's safe?"

"It's off the grid," Joyce explained, trying her best not to sound cold while talking to another mother. "Nobody knows where it is except the people in this room and the people already there."

"You won't be able to take your phones with you," The Guardian said. "The T-1000 will be able to track you that you."

"All right," Clarke said. "Then we'll burn all of the research here and then we'll go with you to wherever it is we need to go."

Within half an hour, the entire entourage had piled into three separate cars to return to the sanctuary in the desert. The Clarke family were all in one car, while the Byers family except for Jonathan and Will were in the truck. The Guardian drove the station wagon with Jonathan and Will in it and the three of them came up with a battle plan for infiltrating Cyberdyne and causing a disturbance to avoid a police presence for as long as possible. They communicated with Clarke over walkie talkies, with Clark explaining the layout of the Cyberdyne building, which let The Guardian compute it to its memory and helped them plan out their movements through the building.

They reached the desert by dawn, and they quickly roused the rest of the others. Mike came running up to Will as soon as he saw him and pulled him into a hug.

"Are you all right?" Mike demanded.

"I'm fine, baby," Will said, giving Mike a kiss on the forehead. "But there's a lot of work to be done."

"What do we need to do?" Mike asked, looking determined.

"We're gonna try and prevent the war from happening in the first place," Will explained as he led Mike over to the table where Joyce had carved the words 'No fate' the evening before. Will tossed his notebook onto the table and waited for the others to join them.

"Will, what's going on?" Dustin asked when he and Lucas reached the table, rubbing sleep out of his eyes.

"We're about to put you to work," Will said.

"Doing what?" asked Lucas, stifling a yawn.

"You'll see when everyone else gets here," Will said.

"I just hope you guys know you interrupted my beauty sleep," said Erica, sounding annoyed.

"Shut it, Erica," Lucas said.

"Why don't you make me?"

"Guys, enough!" Will said impatiently. "There will be time for bickering later, but right now, we really need to focus. Look, here comes everyone else."

The older kids joined the table, followed by Jim, Joyce and the Clarke family. Jonathan took his place next to Will and looked around at everyone before he spoke.

"Okay, before anyone asks, this is Scott Clarke, the director of special projects at Cyberdyne Systems, which is the company responsible for creating Skynet, the computer that declares war on humanity," Jonathan explained. "His family is gonna stay here while we infiltrate Cyberdyne."

There was a beat before anyone spoke.

"And how, pray tell, do you expect us to break into a high security facility like Cyberdyne?" asked Robin. "I mean, no offense, but you guys are exactly known for your subtlety."

"Hey!" Steve exclaimed. "I know that was a dig at me!"

"Shut up!" Jonathan snapped. "Look, guys, I don't mean to be rude, but we've got to focus on this. If we're successful, we'll be able to prevent the war from happening and prevent the world from ending. Isn't that more important than anything else?"

The others all nodded at him.

"Okay, Jonathan, tell us what's gonna happen," Nancy said. "What's the plan?"

"Thanks Nance," Jonathan said, giving his girlfriend a quick peck on the cheek. "Okay, so you, me, Steve and Robin are gonna head to an abandoned building that's about 10 miles away from Cyberdyne. It's a condemned building, so nobody will be around to spot us. We're gonna light it up."

"Light it up?" asked Steve. "You mean, set the place on fire?"

"Yes, dingus, that's exactly what he means," Robin said. "We're doing that in order to distract the police, right?"

Jonathan nodded.

"We're hoping the police response is big enough that they won't be able to figure out what's going on Cyberdyne," Jonathan said.

"Okay, so what about the rest of us?" Nancy asked.

El stepped forward.

"Dad and I are going to head back home," El explained. "We're gonna act as decoys for The T-1000."

"Is that safe?" asked Max, frowning.

"It's not but it might be our only choice," said Jim. "Although the risk is pretty high, we've got to keep The T-1000 busy so it doesn't try to stop what's going on at Cyberdyne."

"We're gonna keep him distracted long enough for the files at

Cyberdyne to be gathered to be destroyed," El said.

"And then when we've gotten the signal from the others, we'll catch his attention and draw him to Cyberdyne, and we'll eliminate him and the research that will lead to Skynet's creation," said Jim.

"And how about the rest of us?" asked Max.

"The rest of us are going to Cyberdyne," Will said. "Mom and The Guardian are going to lead us there, along with Mr. Clarke. Mr. Clarke will get us in past security and then Dustin and Lucas are gonna be out lookouts."

"We can do that," Dustin said with a smirk.

"Yeah, but for how long?" Lucas asked.

"We're doing this at night, so there won't be many people in the building," Will explained. "You guys are just gonna have to keep a look out for any other security guards and make sure they're distracted or incapacitated so they can't alert the police."

"You make it sound so easy," Lucas groaned.

"It'll be fine," Clarke said. "There's usually only one guard stationed out front at night. Any other security on duty will be upstairs and probably won't even check up front."

"The rest of us are going to go upstairs to the lab where Clarke has done all this research," Will continued. "We're going to gather up all of his research and prep it for destruction. We've got several explosive devices here that we're going to bring with us to destroy the research and when he gets there, The T-1000. We'll kill two birds with one stone.

"Max and Erica, you two are gonna hack into the computer network at Cyberdyne," Will said. "I know you two are both really good with computers, so I'm trusting both of you to intercept any police activity in the area. You'll be able to access the police database from Cyberdyne and let us know if there's any trouble."

"You know how hard that's gonna be?" asked Erica. "You're asking us

to break into a top secret database!"

"We can do it," Max said with a determined look on her face. "It'll take both of us using our heads, but we can do it. I know we can."

Will nodded.

"I knew I could count on you two," he said. "Now, does anyone have any questions or concerns? We only got one shot at this, people, so if you have any doubts, now is the time."

Will looked around at the others, and all of them remained silent.

"All right, then," Will said. "Let's get some trucks loaded up with everything we need. We'll head out shortly before sunset and we'll leave together; this way we're all able to carry out our tasks at the same time."

Most of the others stood up from the table and started to get ready for the confrontation. Joyce, The Guardian and Mike stayed behind at the table.

"Good work, Will," Joyce said, giving Will one of her rare smiles. "You're a true leader."

"So is Jonathan," said Will. His mother nodded in agreement. "We did learn from the best, after all."

Joyce chuckled slightly and she walked off to go help Jim and El.

Will turned to Mike, who had a big grin on his face.

"What?" Will asked.

"Oh nothing," Mike said. "It's just great to see you embracing your role as our leader. You definitely make a great leader."

"Thanks, Mike," Will said, blushing.

"I agree, Will Byers," said The Guardian. "You have taken the first steps in embracing your role as the leader of the Human Resistance."

"Are we gonna be successful at this?" Will asked.

"Difficult to predict," The Guardian said. "A lot can go wrong with this. But with so many of us and assuming the distractions are successful, I calculate an 83% chance of success."

"Well, that's better than nothing," Will said with a shrug as he pulled Mike in for another hug.

Notes for the Chapter:

Hello, all!

My apologies for not updating yesterday as originally promised. I was running around all day yesterday with family and friends and had an early birthday celebration (my birthday is in two days). So here's the update.

I can't believe there's only one more chapter left to publish! My plan is to publish the final chapter tomorrow so you can enjoy this story in its entirety beginning then. This story has been in my head for almost exactly a year. I watched The Terminator during the lockdown last March and April and when I did, I tried to imagine the story with the Stranger Things characters in pivotal roles and the idea wouldn't get out of my head, and thus this story was born.

Until tomorrow, my friends!

14. Cyberdyne Showdown

Summary for the Chapter:

The three groups set out with their plans to defeat The T-1000 and prevent the creation of Skynet, thus preventing the war and saving humanity.

Jonathan drove a borrowed SUV to the outskirts of Los Angeles. The condemned building that they were going to light up sat on the edge of town, far enough from Cyberdyne that any police presence would have to go out of the way of the Cyberdyne building to respond to the fire they were about to start.

The car ride over had been a mostly awkwardly silent affair. Nancy sat in the passenger seat, looking out the window, while Steve and Robin sat in the back, both of them staring blankly at each other while Jonathan drove the car.

Finally, when they were just about five minutes from the condemned building, Robin spoke up.

"Are we sure this is gonna work?" she asked.

"It has to," Jonathan replied. "If the fire spreads and grows big enough, it'll keep the police busy as they respond and try and figure out what started it. We'll be out of there long before they get there."

"You'd better be right, Jonathan," Steve said. "I know we have guns in the car, but I'd rather not use them against heavily-armed police officers."

"Oh shut up, Steve," Nancy said in an annoyed tone. She turned to Jonathan. "Can I ask you something?"

"This is a terrible time for that," Jonathan said.

"Well, I'm gonna ask anyway," said Nancy. "Before things get too crazy."

"Fine, what is it?"

"Why didn't you tell any of us before this?" Nancy asked. "Why did you wait til now to tell us?"

Jonathan hesitated for a moment as he turned toward the condemned building.

"Would you guys have believed me?" Jonathan asked. "I mean, think about it: My Mom was in a psychiatric hospital and I wasn't exactly open about why. Would you have believed me if I had told you guys the truth about her and why we lived separate from most other people?"

"I would have believed you, Jonathan," Nancy said. "It might have taken me some time to understand, but I think I eventually would be able to trust you. Besides, that's kinda an elaborate story to come up with on your own."

"Personally, I would've been on the fence about it," Steve said.

"Yeah, I definitely would've thought you were off your rocker, Jonathan," Robin said. "Although I gotta say I'm still not quite convinced you're not insane and this whole thing is a fluke."

Steve glanced over at Robin and saw she had a smirk on her face. He grinned at her.

"Would you like me to prove it to you, Robin?" Jonathan snapped.

"Dude, relax, she was joking!" Steve said.

Robin started laughing.

"Yeah, Jonathan, chill out. I was trying to get a rise out of you. We're all stressed the fuck out as it is. We could all do with a laugh, don't you think?"

There was a tense moment when it seemed like Jonathan was going to explode in anger before he let out a breath and started laughing.

"Yeah, I guess you're right," Jonathan said. "We're about to risk our lives and face almost certain death, we might as well get some laughs in."

"That's the spirit!" Robin said cheerfully.

"We're here," Nancy said as Jonathan brought the SUV to a stop.

They sat in the car for a moment, composing themselves from the laughter. Even Jonathan had to admit that it was nice to get a few laughs out before they risked their lives to save the world. Once they had finally recomposed themselves, they exited the SUV and made their way to the back of it, starting to pull out the supplies they were going to use to light the fire.

Before they headed inside the condemned building, Jonathan reached out to Will on the walkie-talkie he had grabbed before leaving their hiding spot.

"Will, we're headed into the building," he said. "How are things with you?"

"We're almost to Cyberdyne," Will replied on the walkie-talkie. "We're gonna go inside as soon as we get word from you guys and from Dad and El. They're almost at the house."

"Copy that," Jonathan said, putting down the walkie before following the others into the condemned building.

Jim pulled the truck into the driveway of the Byers home. The home was pitch black, just as they had left it before going after Joyce. Jim quickly turned off the engine and turned to El, who had a look of determination on her face.

"You ready for this?" he asked. "It's not gonna be easy."

"I'm ready, Dad."

"These things are tough to kill, El. You're gonna have to move fast to draw it out and get it to chase us."

"Dad, I know," El said, trying to keep the annoyance out of her voice. "We've gone over this ever since I became part of this family. I'm gonna be careful in there, Dad. Besides, I've got you, haven't I?"

"Yeah, I guess that's true, kiddo," Jim said. "Now listen, we're gonna have to skip the talking when we're inside. We don't wanna draw it out too quickly and we have no idea where it will be."

El nodded.

"We shouldn't waste any more time out here," she said.

"Let's go," Jim said, nodding.

The two got out of the truck and reached into the bed of the truck for their weapons and flashlights. El had a small handgun that she made sure was loaded and ready, while Jim opted for a shotgun that packed a powerful punch.

Once their weapons were ready, they nodded at each other before approaching the front door. Jim reached the front door first and unlocked it, quickly walking inside with El following closely. Jim left the door open in case they needed a quick escape.

They turned on their flashlights as soon as they were inside. They shined the lights all through the living room, keeping their guns at the ready in case the T-1000 suddenly made an appearance. Once they were sure the living room was clear, Jim gestured for El to follow him and El nodded.

Jim led El through the rest of the house. They searched room-by-room for any sign of The T-1000. However, the house looked exactly as it did when they had left. Everything was in its place and nothing appeared to be missing.

Within minutes, they had searched every room of the house except for Will's bedroom, and found no trace of The T-1000. Jim led El over to Will's bedroom door and looked at her. She nodded at Jim silently before Jim opened the door, keeping his gun pointed in front of him and his flashlight shining into Will's room.

Right away, they knew The T-1000 was close. Will's room had been ransacked; they could tell because Will normally kept the room neat and tidy, but several of Will's things were thrown around the room. Even the desk had been ransacked. It was likely The T-1000 was

looking for information on Will's whereabouts.

El glanced around the room and noted to herself that nothing seemed to be missing from Will's room. She indicated this to Jim silently, who nodded and motioned for El to follow him out of the room.

Before they could exit the bedroom though, there was a loud crashing sound. Jim and El whipped around and saw The T-1000 crashing through Will's closet door, its silver metal arms shaping into large knives.

El and Jim immediately opened fire on The T-1000, which went flying back into the closet before crashing into the wall with a loud crack. El and Jim stopped shooting and waited as they watched The T-1000 heal itself.

"El, we gotta go," Jim said in a quiet voice.

Once The T-1000 was healed, it raised a finger in front of its face and shook it while it shook its head in a "No, no, no" manner. El snarled at The T-1000 and fired another shot at it.

"You want me and my brothers, motherfucker?" El growled. "Come and get us!"

Jim fired another shot at The T-1000 to force it back while El turned around to get out of the bedroom.

"Come on, El!" Jim shouted once The T-1000 had stumbled backward.

El followed Jim out of the bedroom and through the front door. She didn't have to look behind her to know that The T-1000 was giving chase to them. Within seconds, they were through the front door and slammed it shut behind them. They ran to the truck, with Jim throwing his rifle into the backseat quickly before he started the engine.

The T-1000, meanwhile, was walking out the front door then and spotted Jim and El attempting their escape. It started walking toward the truck slowly, its arms turning into knives once again.

"El, fire at him!" Jim instructed.

El leaned out the window and pointed her gun at The T-1000, firing several shots before she ran out of bullets just as Jim got the truck started and was reversing out of the driveway. El got back into the truck properly and started reloading her gun as Jim sped off.

"Is it on us yet?" Jim demanded as he drove away from the house.

El glanced behind the truck and saw a police patrol car chasing after them with the headlights out.

"Yeah, it took the bait," El replied. She grabbed her walkie-talkie and radioed to Will.

"Will, you there?" she demanded.

"Yeah, I'm here, El, you guys okay?"

"We're fine," El said. "The T-1000 was in your room waiting for us. He's on our tail now. Are you guys ready yet?"

"We'll be ready as soon as you guys get here," Will said. "Jonathan and the others have already started the fire and they're on their way back now. As soon as you guys get here, we'll put the plan into motion."

"Okay, Will, we'll be there soon."

"El!" Will shouted.

"Yeah?"

"Be careful, okay? Tell Dad the same."

"I heard you, son!" Jim shouted as he kept driving the car, looking rather stressed out.

"We'll see you soon, Will."

Will took a deep breath to clear his mind before he led his mother,

Mike and friends along with Clarke into the Cyberdyne building. The future, always so clear to him, had become like a black highway at night. They were in uncharted territory now, making up history as they went along.

"Will?" Mike asked, frowning at Will.

Will opened his eyes and looked up at Mike, nodding.

"The others have their plans in motion, it's time to put ours into play," Will said. "Guardian, take care of the night guard. But remember my order."

"Understood, Will Byers," The Guardian replied before it left the car they had arrived in and headed into the building.

The night guard sitting at the desk spun around in his chair and raised his eyes at The Guardian. He wasn't used to seeing a man in all leather walking into the building and something about this man seemed off to him.

"Good evening," the guard said. "Is there anything I can help you with?"

"That won't be necessary," The Guardian replied before it smacked the guard on the head, causing the guard to fall unconscious and fall from his chair with a thud onto the floor.

The Guardian turned toward the front door of the building again and gave a thumbs-up to the others.

Will turned to the others, who were looking at him as if waiting to follow orders.

"Let's go, everyone," he said. "And remember, keep your heads."

The others all nodded at Will and followed him into the main entrance. The Guardian was tying up the night guard with duct tape when they entered.

"Dustin, Lucas, you guys stay in here and keep guard," Will instructed. "If anyone comes in, you stun them and let me know, all

right?"

"Got it, Will," Lucas said, nodding.

"We'll send the others upstairs to join you when they get here," Dustin added.

Will nodded at his friends.

"The rest of you, with me," Will said to the others.

Will led the rest of the group toward the elevator. They all piled inside the elevator, a difficult task given the explosives they had wheeled into the building with them.

"Clarke, which floor is it?" Will asked once they were all situated.

"25th floor is where the lab and my office are," Clarke replied.

Mike pressed the button for the 25th floor and the elevator started to ascend.

"What can we expect?" Joyce asked Clarke.

"Well, since it's after hours, there shouldn't be anybody in the lab or the office," Clarke said. "In fact the building will be mostly empty this time of night."

"Good," Will said. "We don't need any unnecessary casualties here. Mr. Clarke, can you help Max and Erica hack into the network?"

"I can do it," Clarke said, nodding.

"Good," Will said. "Once they're patched in, I'll need you to tell us what all needs to be destroyed."

"It has to be everything," Joyce added. "Nobody must follow your work, Scott. We have to make sure."

"I know," Clarke said. "We'll destroy everything here."

Just then the elevator slowed down before it came to a stop. There was a ding as the doors opened. Clarke and Joyce stepped out of the

elevator first and glanced down the hallway, looking around for a sign of anybody patrolling the hallways.

"It's okay," Clarke said, turning to the others and nodding.

The Guardian pushed the explosives out of the elevator, followed by Will, Mike, Max and Erica. Clarke led them through the hallways toward the lab, where they would start to destroy Clarke's research. Just as they reached the lab, Will's walkie talkie went off with the sound of Jonathan's voice.

"Will, you there?"

"Talk to me, Jonathan," Will said.

"We're almost to Cyberdyne. We passed several emergency vehicles headed toward the fire. We might have gone a little overboard with it."

"Good, that'll keep them busy while we work here," Will said. "Dustin and Lucas are in the lobby. They'll send you upstairs when you get here."

"See you soon," Jonathan replied.

Clarke opened the doors to the lab and led the others inside. Joyce turned on the lights, which showed everyone just how big the room was.

"All right, let's get to work everyone," she said.

"Okay, here's what needs to go: Everything in every desk in this room contains research about the chip from the first Terminator," Clarke explained. "All the files in my office will need to be destroyed as well. The prototype chips will need to be cut up first."

"What can we use to cut them up?" Joyce asked.

Instead of anyone answering, there was a sound of glass crashing. Everyone turned toward the sound and saw The Guardian free an ax that was stored nearby.

"This will destroy the prototypes," The Guardian said.

"And what about the arm and chip?" Will asked.

"You and I will access the room to grab them as soon as I help Erica and Max hack into the police network," Clarke said.

"All right, then. Let's get to work everyone."

The group got to work right away. Will, Mike, Joyce and The Guardian spread out to the desks in the lab, emptying them of all papers, files, books and other items, throwing them into a large pile in the center of the room near the explosives. They tossed all the prototype chips in the pile, where The Guardian started smashing them using the ax it had obtained.

Meanwhile, Clarke helped Max and Erica log into a computer nearby so they could keep track of the police presence surrounding the building. They were patched in within ten minutes of their work.

"Okay, Will, we're inside!" Erica exclaimed when they were finished.

"Good work," Will said, not looking up from throwing paper into the pile. "How are we looking?"

"There's a pretty large presence responding to the condemned building fire," Max said. "It looks like the whole thing is up in flames."

"Oh good, then our plan worked," said Robin, who had just walked into the room with Jonathan, Nancy and Steve.

Will looked up and beamed at them.

"Hey guys, glad to have you all here," Will said. "Good work at the building. We need you all to help us finish emptying these desks and destroying the prototype chips. Clarke and I are gonna go get the chip and arm from the first Terminator."

"All right, Will," Jonathan said, motioning for the others to follow him and spread out in the room to help destroy the research.

Will turned to Mike, who had been working with Will.

"I'll be back in a minute, okay?" Will said.

Mike nodded at him.

"Just be careful," he said.

"Hey, he's not here yet, is he?" Will said with a grin.

Mike chuckled.

"Yeah, but I can't help worry about you."

"Flirt with me later, Michael," Will said.

Mike let out a loud laugh as Will turned away to head to the back of the lab with Clarke.

Clarke handed Will a card that would access the vault where the arm and chip were stored. They ran toward the vault's entrance. Clarke pointed at the panel where Will would enter his card. Clarke went to the opposite panel.

"Got your key in?" Clarke asked. Will nodded. "We've gotta turn them at the same time. You turn it to the right. Here we go. Three, two, one, TURN!"

Together, Will and Clarke turned their cards, which unlocked the vault. They regrouped and walked into the vault, where Clarke accessed the panel to release the arm and chip from their stored spots. When the arm and chip were released, Will approached the arm while Clarke picked up the chip in its container.

"Now, in order to get that open, you'll need to..."

Will ignored Clarke and instead pushed the arm off its display, which shattered the glass it was stored in. Clarke flinched when the glass broke and had just recovered when Will yanked the chip out of his hand and threw it to the ground, breaking its glass as well. Will bent down to pick up the two pieces.

"We've got Skynet by the balls now, don't we?" Will asked with a smirk. "Let's go."

Will and Clarke left the vault, not bothering to close it behind them. They rejoined the others, who were finishing putting the last of the research into the pile to be destroyed. The Guardian had disappeared, presumably to go fetch the last of the C4 barrels and put them into place for the explosion.

"How we doing?" Joyce asked.

"We've got the chip and the arm," Will said, throwing both of them into the pile. "You guys have everything in there?"

"I damn well hope so," Steve said. "I'm sick of emptying all these desks."

"Shut up, Steve!" Jonathan and Nancy said at the same time. They both looked at each other, grinning.

"One more barrel," The Guardian said, walking into the room, wheeling in a barrel on a dolly and setting it up next to the explosives.

"How do you set them off?" Clarke asked.

The Guardian showed him a remote detonator, a small transmitter with a red plunger.

"Remote control," The Guardian replied, making a plunger-pushing motion with his thumb and an accompanying "click" sound. Clarke nodded at him.

"Will!" came El's voice from Will's walkie-talkie.

"Yeah, El?" Will said, holding up his walkie.

"We're just about to turn onto the street outside Cyberdyne. He's hot on our trail!"

"Perfect timing! We're all set up in here. Just make sure he doesn't follow you directly into the building. You guys gotta come up here

with Dustin and Lucas!"

El turned to Jim after hearing Will's instruction.

"We're gonna have to buy ourselves a few seconds," she said.

Jim nodded as he swerved into the parking lot of the Cyberdyne building.

"Shoot out one of his tires," Jim said. "If he tries to over-correct, he'll flip his car."

El leaned out of the window, pointing her handgun at The T-1000's patrol car. She aimed at one of the tires and took a deep breath to calm herself before she fired a single shot. The bullet hit its target and El watched the tire deflate instantly. The T-1000 swerved, trying to correct its course, but since it was going so fast, it overdid it, which sent the patrol car into the air and rolled over upside down.

"Got it!" El shouted.

"Good girl!" Jim yelled back as he brought the truck to a stop. He quickly grabbed his shotgun while El jumped out of the truck, reloading her gun as they ran toward the entrance.

Jim and El burst through the front doors just as they heard the sound of The T-1000 throwing the patrol car off its body.

"You two, let's go, now!" Jim bellowed at Dustin and Lucas, who immediately ran out from behind the front desk and followed Jim and El to the elevator.

They reached the elevator and pressed the button for the 25th floor. The elevator doors shut just as The T-1000 came bursting through the front door in its default form before it ran toward the elevator. The elevator shot upward before The T-1000 reached it.

"Dude, El, that was freaking incredible!" Dustin exclaimed.

"Yeah, how'd you get a shot off like that in a moving truck?" Lucas asked, beaming.

"I learned from the best, you guys," El said grinning at them and gesturing at Jim.

"Yeah, yeah," Jim said. "We'll have time for you to brag later. For now, we gotta regroup with the others and kill this thing before it gets us."

The kids nodded at Jim and remained silent as the elevator continued its ascent. They soon reached the 25th floor and quickly ran off toward the lab. They reached it in seconds.

"He's on our tail!" Jim shouted as they ran into the lab.

"Good, then we'll be here waiting for him," Will said. "Dustin, Lucas, get a gun and get ready to fight this thing!"

Dustin and Lucas wordlessly obeyed Will and grabbed the free guns remaining on the ground. They got into formation with the rest of the others, who had their weapons trained on the lab's entrance. They waited with bated breath for The T-1000 to arrive. They heard a faint ding from one of the elevators and they all leaned closer to the door, ready to open fire at a moment's notice.

Suddenly, there was a loud crashing sound to their right. Some of them turned toward the sound of the noise, which allowed The T-1000 to enter the room without them noticing and quickly catch them off guard. Within seconds, Nancy, Steve and Robin had been disarmed and fallen to the ground while the others opened fire on The T-1000.

The T-1000 leapt across the room in its default form, doing whatever it could to avoid the barrage of bullets. When it crawled along the walls or the ceiling, it moved like a spider going after its prey. None of the bullets were having an effect on The T-1000 and it was slowly destroying all of the guns the group was using.

Soon, The T-1000 cornered Mike, whose gun had chosen then to jam on him. Mike cursed as he tried to fix his gun and The T-1000 dropped down from the ceiling and reverted to its human form as it approached him. Mike started backing away from The T-1000 as it advanced, trying to fix his gun but to no avail.

Before Mike could do anything else, he found himself being tackled to the ground. He fell to the ground with a thud and a grunt and looked up to see The Guardian was now firing on The T-1000 with a rifle, sending it toward the explosives and the evidence they were going to destroy. Mike looked up at his savior and saw Will looking at Mike with an amused expression on his face. The two of them sat up, both staring at each other. Finally, Will spoke.

"Mike, I love you, but next time, jump out of the way," Will said before he leaned forward and pressed his and Mike's lips together in a passionate kiss.

Meanwhile, The Guardian was still firing on The T-1000, forcing it closer and closer to the explosives. When The Guardian finally ran out of bullets, it threw the rifle to the ground while The T-1000 healed itself. The Guardian took off the grenade launcher it had been wearing strapped around its body and loaded it quickly. The Guardian pointed the grenade launcher at The T-1000, which froze in its tracks.

"You are terminated!" The Guardian exclaimed before it fired a single shot at The T-1000.

The T-1000 flinched as it normally did when shot. But unlike before, it looked up in shock as it realized what was about to happen. The grenade detonated, tearing apart The T-1000's body as it exploded. When the explosion finished, The T-1000 stood there with its body ripped apart and unable to be put back together. The T-1000 screamed out in a robotic way as it tried to put itself back together again, but to no avail. It fell over and started squirming in an attempt to put its body back together again.

"Go now!" Will shouted, helping Mike to his feet and grabbing his hand.

The others got back to their feet and started scrambling out of the room. They were able to get out within moments and made a beeline for the elevators. They all piled into separate elevators and headed back to the lobby.

Once in the lobby, they ran for the entrance. When Will reached it

with Mike, they stopped running to let The Guardian catch up with him.

"Will, do it now!" Joyce shouted as she ran with Jim and the others toward their cars.

Will nodded at The Guardian.

"Let's end this," he said.

The Guardian silently nodded at Will and clicked the button on the detonator. The building shook as the explosion ripped apart the lab upstairs. It sent a shockwave through the building and knocked Mike and Will to the ground, both of them landing with a grunt. The Guardian bent down and helped them both to their feet again, motioning for them to get away from the now burning building.

As they ran to the cars, they could all hear the sounds of screaming from The T-1000 as it burned in the flames from the explosion. Soon, the screams died out and The Guardian nodded at Will, confirming at The T-1000 had perished in the resulting fire.

Will and Mike piled into the SUV with Joyce in the passenger seat and The Guardian driving. The Guardian started up the engine and followed Hopper's truck and Jonathan's car away from the building. It was only when they were about five miles away that they all collectively let out sighs of relief as they realized they had gotten away without alerting any authorities that they were responsible for the explosion.

As The Guardian drove the SUV back toward the hideout in the desert, Mike and Will leaned on each other, holding hands, and resting peacefully with their heads touching. Will let out a sigh of relief.

"We did it, Mike," Will whispered. "We got it."

"I'm so proud of you, Will," Mike replied. "You were amazing in there. And thank you for saving me. I love you."

"I love you too, Mike," Will said, giving Mike a kiss.

The unknown future rolled toward them. Will, especially, faced it for the first time with a sense of hope. Because if a machine, a Terminator like The Guardian, could learn the value of human life, perhaps people could, too.

Notes for the Chapter:

Here it is, my dear readers: the final chapter of No Fate.

I can't believe it's already over! This journey has been about a year in the making for me and I can't believe it's already time for you all to read this story in its entirety!

Up next is Camp NaNoWriMo for the month of April. I'm thinking of soliciting one-shot ideas from my readers; look for a post soon on here and on Tumblr!

Until then, onward!

Author's Note:

Happy New Year, Stranger Things readers!

Here is the prologue of my NaNoWriMo 2020 fic, No Fate, a crossover of The Terminator and Stranger Things!

A lot more story is to come. I still have to write the ending of this story, but the rest of the chapters are written, they just need some editing love. I won't promise a consistent publishing schedule, as life happens, but I should update this story pretty regularly.

Stay tuned for more soon!